

A Register Analysis of Public Prayers

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Introduction

Prayer, as defined by scholars Corwin and Brown, is “a form of ritual language . . . [that] affords humans the possibility to communicate with non-human others.”¹ As a linguistic register (that is, a variety of language defined by an area of use, such as academic research articles, text messages, sermons, or blog posts), it denotes communication with an unseen being, primarily in a religious context. However, “despite the importance of religion and ritual in anthropology, prayer, a key component of religious practices and institutions, has received very little empirical attention.”² This is partially because the complexity of religion as a sociological concept makes it particularly difficult to study in an empirical context, even when it is broken down into individual acts and practices, such as prayer. Across cultures and religions, prayers appear in a wide variety of forms, each with a different intention and often with a different expected audience and response.³ Thus, it is impossible to establish universal generalizations about prayer, though key conclusions can be drawn from investigating specific contexts.

1. Anna I. Corwin and Taylor W. Brown, “Emotion in the Language of Prayer,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Emotion*, ed. Sonya Pritzker, Janina Fenigsen, and James Wilce (London: Routledge, 2019), 325–43.

2. Patricia Baquedano-López, “Prayer,” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9, no. 1–2 (1999): 197, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.1999.9.1-2.197>.

3. Tania ap Siôn, “Implicit Religion and Ordinary Prayer,” *Implicit Religion* 13, no. 3 (December 19, 2010): 275–94, <https://doi.org/10.1558/imre.v13i3.275>.

Several researchers have examined Christian prayers from a linguistic perspective, including ap Siôn,⁴ Szuchewycz,⁵ and Shoaps;⁶ these researchers each studied prayers in a different religious group and setting, and they all provide valuable insight into the attitudes and intentions of prayer-givers within their specific religious group of interest. However, to date, we know of no published studies about prayer language in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints despite the existing findings that members of the Church have unique language patterns.⁷ By conducting a linguistic analysis of the prayers of Church members, similar answers about prayer-givers and their relationship with the divine may be gleaned.

In the Church, prayer-givers face a unique dilemma of formality. On one hand, prayers are offered to a being who is considered a powerful deity worthy of respect.⁸ On the other hand, Latter-day Saints also view God as their loving Father, which suggests a more familial, intimate, and personal relationship. This seeming contradiction is even more pronounced in prayers offered in sessions of general conference, where speakers are people of authority presenting to millions of strangers, which suggests formality, but the strangers are also referred to as “brothers and sisters,” which suggests a desire for closeness. Thus, analysis of general conference prayers may provide opportunities for research into how members view their relationship with God, their spirituality, and the concept of religion.

One way to study large quantities of language data, like the hundreds of recorded general conference talks, is to use the methods of corpus linguistics.⁹ This subfield of linguistics leverages computers to automatically analyze large databases of language. A corpus (plural *corpora*) is a large sample of instances of language use (that is, texts) designed to represent a variety of language, such as a dialect (for example, British

4. Ap Siôn, “Implicit Religion and Ordinary Prayer.”

5. Bohdan Szuchewycz, “Evidentiality in Ritual Discourse: The Social Construction of Religious Meaning,” *Language in Society* 23, no. 3 (1994): 389–410.

6. Robin A. Shoaps, “‘Pray Earnestly’: The Textual Construction of Personal Involvement in Pentecostal Prayer and Song,” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (2002): 34–71.

7. Wendy Baker-Smemoe and David Bowie, “Linguistic Behavior and Religious Activity,” *Language and Communication* 42 (2015): 116–24, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2014.12.004>.

8. “God the Father,” Topics and Questions, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/eng/manual/gospel-topics/god-the-father>.

9. Michael Stubbs and Dorothea Halbe, “Corpus Linguistics: Overview,” in *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, ed. Carol A. Chapelle (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0033>.

English), genre (for example, romantic fiction), or register (for example, prayer). The methods used in corpus linguistics are inherently quantitative, as they deal with frequencies of occurrence of linguistic phenomena and statistical patterns of those occurrences. However, because corpus analysis relies on full textual data, one can also return to the prose to qualitatively interpret the results. Thus, corpus studies allow for traditionally qualitative questions to be answered quantitatively or with mixed methods. As a powerful analytical approach, corpus linguistics is flexible in its applications, ranging in fields from legal discourse¹⁰ to medicine¹¹ to call centers¹² to forensics.¹³

One common type of corpus analysis is keyness analysis. Keyness analyses use statistical tests to determine which words occur with unusual frequency in a target corpus as compared to a reference corpus.¹⁴ This is to say that they reveal the specific words that differentiate two corpora, thus allowing researchers to pinpoint key differences between the two registers or genres represented in the corpora. As such, a keyness analysis is a highly effective method for identifying keywords and features of specific registers, like prayers. Another analysis is n-gram analysis. This analysis uses frequently recurring strings of words (that is, n-grams) in a corpus to uncover formulaic phraseologies that act together as chunks or units.

As Bowie and Baker-Smemoe¹⁵ identified, religious groups and subgroups have their own religiolects, or religious linguistic patterns, and the ability to fluently utilize features of a religiolect is an integral part of developing a sense of belonging. Since prayer is a regular and public linguistic act performed in front of the in-group, knowing and being able to implement keywords and patterns as well as the phraseology of

10. Stanisław Goźdz-Roszkowski, "Corpus Linguistics in Legal Discourse," *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 34, no. 5 (2021): 1515–40, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-021-09860-8>.

11. Shelley Staples, *The Discourse of Nurse-Patient Interactions: Contrasting the Communicative Styles of U.S. and International Nurses* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2015), <https://benjamins.com/catalog/scl.72>.

12. Eric Frigal, *The Language of Outsourced Call Centers: A Corpus-Based Study of Cross-Cultural Interaction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2009), <https://benjamins.com/catalog/scl.34>.

13. Jack Grieve and others, "Attributing the *Bixby Letter* Using N-Gram Tracing," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 34, no. 3 (September 2019): 493–512, <https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqyo42>.

14. Costas Gabrielatos, "Keyness Analysis: Nature, Metrics and Techniques," in *Corpus Approaches to Discourse: A Critical Review*, ed. Charlotte Taylor and Anna Marchi (Oxford: Routledge, 2018), 225–58, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/227092349.pdf>.

15. Baker-Smemoe and Bowie, "Linguistic Behavior and Religious Activity," 116–24.

prayers would allow children, English learners, and new Church members to more quickly develop that same sense of belonging.

The Present Study

The goal of this study was to identify the defining aspects of Latter-day Saint prayers in general conferences in the hopes of (1) investigating the relationship between Church members and the divine in a public context and (2) uncovering patterns of language that could begin to assist in developing resources for new members and second-language English speakers to promote feelings of linguistic belonging.

Methods

The methods for this study were a situational analysis and a linguistic analysis, which together form a register analysis. The situational analysis¹⁶ was conducted to justify the use of the data for this study. However, because the results of the situational analysis lay beyond the main focus of this study, the methods and results for the situational analysis can be found in the supplementary materials to this article. Suffice it to state that the results of the situational analysis justify the data used in this study. The linguistic analysis consisted of a keyness analysis, which identified words distinctive to public prayers, and an n-gram analysis, which identified the most common phraseology in prayers. The keywords derived from the keyness analysis were interpreted using a thematic analysis, which is detailed in appendix B. Additional details about the methods can be found in the supplementary materials.

The Data

The primary source of data for this study consists of transcriptions of the prayers given at general conferences from 2010 to 2019. These were extracted from the Church's official YouTube channel, which contains the complete prayers.¹⁷ The resulting English Orisons by Saints Corpus (that is, ENOS Corpus) consists of 209 prayers with 36,345 words.¹⁸

16. Douglas Biber and Susan Conrad, "Describing the Situational Characteristics of Registers and Genres," in *Register, Genre, and Style* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 31–49, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511814358>.

17. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "General Conference" (YouTube channel), accessed April 12, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/@churchofjesuschristgeneralconf>.

18. Contact the authors to request (noncommercial) access to the ENOS Corpus.

Linguistic Analysis

A keyness analysis involves using statistical tests¹⁹ to derive words that make a specific type of language use distinct from other language use. The resulting keywords were divided into categories using a thematic analysis (details in appendix B and supplementary materials). Lastly, an n-gram analysis was conducted to find patterns in the language of prayers on their own. N-grams are frequently reoccurring phrases or sequences of words. Additional details about this analysis can be found in the supplemental materials.

Results and Discussion

Keyness Results

The keyness analysis resulted in a total of seventy keywords that occurred a total of 19,630 times. These keywords made up over half of the total words in the ENOS corpus, signifying that most words were frequently repeated. The keywords were divided into eight categories (see table 1), which are explained in their own sections below.

Table 1.
Overall Results of Register Analysis

Functional Category	Keywords in Category	Occurrences in ENOS Corpus
Requesting	10	1464
Thanking	5	787
Requesting/thanking	11	1876
Term of reference	17	2785
Leave taking	5	1444
Personal pronominals	6	5052
Reference to current time/place	13	2062
Clausal elaboration	6	4160
Total	70	19630

19. Log-Likelihood was used as the keyness statistic with an alpha level of $p < 0.05$ (with a Bonferroni correction). Keyness is a statistical (log-likelihood) measure for how “key” or specific to the target corpus a word is. It compares the actual frequency to the expected frequency to accept or reject the null hypothesis that a given word’s frequency is a result of random chance to find words. To further reduce noise in the results, words that occurred less than fifty times or had a keyness statistic of less than twenty were also removed.

Requests. This category is characterized by words used to accomplish requests in prayers. One of the primary acts performed in Church prayers is that of requesting. Results for this category are shown in table 2. Requests are frequently made by using declarative forms that include “ask” and “pray” and imperative forms that include “please,” as emphasized in the following examples.

“We *ask*²⁰ a special blessing to be with those speaking to us.”

“*Please bless* all of us, Father, that we will follow the prophets.”

Because deference is important, requests are often made by using modals (“wilt,” “may,” “might”) and the requests are made “humbly.” Specifically, prayers often request “help” or for God to “bless” us (or leave a blessing “upon” us).

Table 2.
Requesting
Keywords

pray	<i>humbly</i>
bless	<i>may</i>
ask	<i>please</i>
wilt	<i>upon</i>
might	<i>help</i>

In the field of sociolinguistics, commands and direct requests are called “negatively impolite” because they leave the addressee without an easy “out.” In other words, if the addressee cannot or does not wish to fulfill a request, it is more difficult to refuse when the request was made in a negatively impolite way. Counterintuitively, many of the phrases used in

prayers to ask for blessings, such as “we pray that” and “we ask that,” fit the definition of being negatively impolite due to their directness. It is interesting that the prayer-givers appear to use elements of impoliteness with a being whom they perceive to be omnipotent. These same prayer-givers tend to refer to the addressee as “Heavenly Father,” though, and less politeness is generally required with family members like fathers in the modern American culture, which is the context of the prayers in question. Other keywords, such as “humbly” and “please,” also soften the impoliteness and demonstrate more respect for the addressee. Similarly, broader structural elements of prayers, such as giving thanks before beginning a request and asking for things that God already desires (as in “bless us to serve with joy and gratitude”), could serve to reduce the impoliteness. This combination of traditionally impolite and polite language suggests that speakers talk to God with the assumption that their relationship is both hierarchal and familial.

Thanking. This category is characterized by words used to accomplish giving thanks in prayers (see table 3). Thanking in prayers is accomplished both by direct means using declaratives (for example, “we thank thee for . . .” or “we express our gratitude for . . .”) as well

20. In each example, keywords from the category of interest are marked in italics. All examples are taken directly from the ENOS corpus.

as by stating the prayer giver's feelings (for example, "we are thankful/grateful for . . ."). This is a very narrow set of means by which thanks are accomplished. In other circumstances, thanks in English are most frequently accomplished by the formulaic expression "thank you/thanks for . . .,"²¹ which we did not observe at all in this corpus. Instead, "we" is always overtly expressed and "thee" is substituted for "you." We will return to the use of pronominals in discussing the "personal pronominals" category.

Requesting and Thanking. There were also a number of words used for both requesting and thanking (see table 4).

The word "for" was particularly interesting. It appeared in the majority of cases for both requesting and thanking as in the following examples:

"We are grateful *for* a living prophet."

"Finally, we pray *for* a blessing upon the widows."

The rest of the words in this category were things that were requested and thanked for. Consider the following two examples where "messages" are part of what is being asked and what gratitude is given for:

"and pray that their *messages* will be received."

"We're grateful for their *messages* and for the Spirit."

Note how a pattern within prayers is to request something and then to thank God that it has been received. This is a very common pattern that arose in the data for many types of things that were both requested and for which gratitude was given—things in both this and the "term of reference" category (for example, "love," "blessings," "gospel," "Monson," and "Son").

Term of Reference. Words in this category are words used to refer to personages. In prayers, holy figures (members of the Godhead and leaders of the Church) are frequently referenced. These are all frequently the object of requests and thanks but are used in other ways as well. Note that many of the words in this category that are not nouns are words that are used in combination with nouns to form terms of reference for holy figures (for example, "Beloved Son," "holy prophets," and "living Christ"). This variation in the terms of reference for Deity signifies the complex nature of those personages as well as the

Table 3.
Thanking
Keywords

grateful	gratitude
thank	express
thankful	

Table 4.
Requesting
and Thanking
Keywords

for	blessings
hearts	blessing
messages	hear
love	gospel

21. Stephanie W. Cheng, "A Corpus-Based Approach to the Study of Speech Act of Thanking," *Concentric: Studies in Linguistics* 36, no. 2 (July 2010): 257–74.

Table 5.
Term of Reference
Keywords

Father	Christ
Son	Thomas
beloved	Spirit
dear	Heavenly
Jesus	living
Monson	apostles
heaven	President
prophet	holy
prophets	

complex relationship that prayer-givers have with them. For instance, when looking at terms of reference for God, we observed instances of “Heavenly Father,” “Father in Heaven,” “God,” “God, the Father,” and “Lord,” with “dear” appearing in front of many of them. For Jesus Christ, there were even more highly frequent variants. Note that in the case of references to God the Father, the variants are used in the greeting part of prayers (as in “dear Father in Heaven”) and in leave taking (as in “in the name of *thy* Son, Jesus Christ, amen”).

Thomas S. Monson, the prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, led the Church for most of the 2010 to 2019 period. Prayer-givers often asked for blessings to be bestowed specifically upon the President of the Church, which is why “Thomas” and “Monson” are also keywords.

Leave Taking. This category is characterized by the method used by

Table 6.
Leave-Taking
Keywords

amen	say
name	in
things	

prayer-givers for ending a prayer. In linguistic terms, the act of ending an interaction is known as leave taking.²² Virtually all prayers were ended using almost the same wording “in the name of (Thy Son,) (even) Jesus Christ, amen,” where parenthesized segments are optional. Variants of this ending might include “our Savior” or “our Redeemer.”

Personal Pronominals. This category is characterized by words that stand in place of terms for people. The six words that form this category are all first- or second-person: the three first-person pronominals being “we,” “our,” and “us,” and the three second-person pronominals being “thee,” “thy,” and “thou.” It is interesting to note that the possessive forms “ours” and “thine” are missing, as are all of the forms of the second-person pronominals more common in contemporary English (“you,” “your,” and “yours”). It is also interesting to note that in Early Modern English, “thou” and its corresponding forms were considered more familiar and, therefore, less formal than “you” and its corresponding forms.²³ The singular second-person pronouns could be used in prayers for a sign of closeness. However, if they are perceived as more formal in contemporary language,

22. Miriam A. Locher and Sage L. Graham, eds., introduction to *Interpersonal Pragmatics* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2010), 3, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110214338.o.1>.

23. Charles Barber, Joan C. Beal, and Philip A. Shaw, *The English Language: A Historical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 196–97, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511817601>.

their use in prayers could indicate a show of respect. Prayer-givers could also be using these pronouns simply because it is traditional or stylistic.

The high rate of use of first- and second-person pronouns suggests that one of the purposes of prayers is to establish a connection between the speaker and the addressee, or, in other words, the prayer-giver and God. This is especially evident in sequences of words like “we thank *thee* for” ($n = 114$) and “we ask *thee* for” ($n = 59$).

Reference to Current Time or Place. Words in this category refer to times and places, especially deictically, meaning in relation to the time and place where the words were spoken (see table 8). Demonstratives (“this,” “these,” and “those”) were frequently used to refer to the current time and place as in “this session” ($n = 54$), “these latter days” ($n = 13$), and “those who will speak” ($n = 11$). Other words in this category refer directly to the current setting: “session,” “general conference,” “today,” “here,” and so forth. Additional words in this category are words that reference the people not physically but virtually in attendance “throughout” the “world.” “Have” is also included in this category because it is most used as a present-perfect construction, which grammatically relates the past events, which have persisted up to the current time (as in the following example), to the immediate context:

“we are grateful for the messages that we *have* just heard.”

Clausal Elaboration. Perhaps the least transparent category, the clausal elaboration category, consists of keywords that have been shown to be features of clausal elaboration²⁴ (see table 9). These types of features have been tied to the situational parameter of real-time language use.²⁵ Because Latter-day Saint public prayers are not scripted beforehand, prayer-givers are usually required to come up with the ideas and how to word them in the moment. This is a cognitively challenging endeavor, especially when one is speaking in front of a large audience, increasing affect, and thereby decreasing cognition. For these reasons,

Table 7.
Pronominal
Keywords

thy	our
we	thou
thee	us

Table 8.
Reference to Current
Time/Place Keywords

this	world
session	these
conference	today
throughout	earth
general	day
here	have
those	

24. Douglas Biber, Bethany Gray, and Kornwipa Poonpon, “Should We Use Characteristics of Conversation to Measure Grammatical Complexity in L2 Writing Development?” *TESOL Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2011): 18–19, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41307614>.

25. Douglas Biber, *Variation across Speech and Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511621024>.

Table 9.
Clausal Elaboration
Keywords

that	are
re*	be
and	who

*As in *they're* or *you're*.

relating ideas usually happens with clausal elaboration features. Consider the following example, “We *are* grateful, Father, for the witness of the Holy Ghost *that* enlightens our minds *and* quickens our understandings, *that* we might comprehend *that* which we have been taught, *that* as we listen *and* act, *that* we might draw closer to Thee, *that* we may become more like Thy Son.”

Note in this example that each keyword relates the following idea to the previous one overtly and using many words. By spreading information out over many words, it allows the brain additional time to think of what to say next. From this example, consider the fact that “that which we have been taught” essentially means the same as a single word, “teachings,” but rather than using the one-word option, the prayer giver has opted to use many words instead. This pattern was observed repeatedly in virtually all prayers observed in the corpus. All words in this list function similarly, allowing the speaker to space out ideas over more words and time. This indicates that prayer-giving in public is a difficult task with which new members or language learners might struggle.

N-Grams

The most frequent n-grams are displayed in table 10.

Of the 134 unique words that made up the forty resulting n-grams, 117 were keywords (87.31 percent). Every n-gram except for one, “of the twelve,” contained at least one keyword, and thirty-eight of them contained at least two keywords, indicating that n-grams are comprised mostly of keywords and that prayers are highly linguistically formulaic

Table 10. Frequencies of Most Common N-Grams

Jesus Christ amen	we thank thee for	Thomas S Monson
the name of	in the name of Jesus Christ	Father in heaven we
we are grateful	Father in heaven	we are so
in the name of	in the name of Jesus Christ	that we have
of Jesus Christ	amen	thee for the
we thank thee	Son Jesus Christ	President Thomas S
name of Jesus Christ	of thy son	Monson
name of Jesus Christ amen	we pray for	we are grateful for the
we are grateful for	that we may	we thank thee for the
thank thee for	that we might	we ask thee
we pray that	thy Son Jesus Christ	and we pray
grateful for the	in heaven we	are so grateful
in the name of Jesus	Heavenly Father we	

in nature. Based on table 10, the n-grams all occur in a wide range of prayers, suggesting that Church prayers in general conference are made up of many n-grams that are in turn made up of many keywords, further indicating that public prayers are cognitively demanding tasks because, instead of creating new ways of saying something, prayer-givers appear to rely on fixed phrases, which they have likely memorized as chunks. In fact, an entire prayer can be conducted almost entirely of n-grams and keywords, as seen in appendix A. Thus, learning the keywords from this study and how they are used could be the basis for constructing prayers for those unfamiliar with this particular register in Latter-day Saint English. This is further supported by the fact that, of the 36,345 words in the ENOS Corpus, 19,816 (54.52 percent) are keywords.

Conclusion

The original goal of this study was to find insights into language, situations, and functions of prayers offered in general conferences by leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through analyzing specific keywords. The keywords revealed that prayers are more relationally based and functionally driven, in that they use pronominals and specific speech acts such as requesting and thanking. This suggests that prayers are meant to strengthen the connection between self and God. We also found that prayers in general conference were affected by the context and also appeared to be cognitively demanding.

Using the words and n-grams from our analysis, one could easily create pedagogical materials or add to existing materials for new members or language learners who would like to learn the conventional language of prayers in a public church setting. The Church is constantly growing and increasing in its global presence. Therefore, there will be a continuing need for resources to help members across the world to become acculturated to the common practices of the Church and gain a sense of belonging through learning the typical customs, traditions, and language elements. In the future, this same analysis could be used to help develop and improve English learning materials about prayer, such as those found in guides for missionaries or Primary teachers. Furthermore, this type of analysis could be applied in other registers within the Church to produce word and phrase lists for other purposes as well.

The n-gram analysis also shows that prayers are highly formulaic in nature. Prayers are largely, perhaps mostly, made up of sequences of preset n-grams that are pieced together into larger pieces. Further

research is required to determine whether this is because prayer-givers rely on oral tradition, because formulas are easier to produce spontaneously, because specific constructions are seen as more respectful or formal, or because of some other reason. Further research could also investigate broader structural patterns and elements of prayers.

Similarly, more research needs to be done on prayers in other settings. As discussed, general conferences are a unique environment, even within the context of the Church. While this study is very representative of that setting during a specific time frame, it does not represent other prayers, such as family, congregational, or individual prayers. Any one of these, or all of these, could have vastly different structures.

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Brett Hashimoto is an assistant professor of linguistics at Brigham Young University. His research interests involve corpus linguistics, vocabulary studies, legal linguistics, register, and language assessment. He is particularly interested in the use of linguistics to address practical, real-world problems.

Appendix A: Constructed Prayer from N-Grams

The following text passage is an example of a realistic prayer that is almost entirely composed of the most common n-grams in the ENOS corpus. Words in parentheses are not keywords. The ENOS corpus contains only the texts of prayers offered from 2010 to 2019. Thomas S. Monson was the Church President for the majority of this time period, hence his first and last name occurred as keywords in the corpus and are included in the example prayer below.

“Our dear Heavenly Father, we are grateful (to)* be here (and) throughout (the) world for this session (of) general conference. We thank thee for our beloved prophet, President Thomas (S.) Monson. We humbly ask thee that thou wilt bless us (with) thy Holy Spirit this day. We love thee, and we say these things in (the) name (of) Jesus Christ, amen.”

Appendix B: Braun and Clarke's Phases of a Thematic Analysis

- Phase 1: familiarize with data—this was done through the process of creating the corpus.
- Phase 2: generate initial codes—these were generated via the keyword analysis.
- Phase 3: search for themes—this phase was performed by organizing and reorganizing codes into theme-piles until all of the codes were sorted (see Braun and Clarke's method²⁶).
- Phase 4: review themes—once a set of candidate themes was created, a dual-criteria for judging categories was used to determine the cohesiveness, meaningfulness, and distinctness of themes by checking each code in each theme for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity.²⁷ This involved two steps: (1) reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts and (2) reviewing each theme in relation to the dataset separately, to ensure relevance of each theme, and together, so that they reflect the dataset as a whole (see Braun and Clarke²⁸).
- Phase 5: define and name themes—based on the codes that made up the theme, short descriptions of themes were created, and the themes were labeled according to those descriptions.
- Phase 6: produce the report—the report is included in the results section.

26. Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>.

27. Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd ed. (Newbury Park, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1990).

28. Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," 91–92.

Appendix C: Full List of Keywords

Category	Keyword	Keyness	Frequency
<i>Requests</i>	pray	1203.7	369
	bless	629.6	201
	ask	325.8	142
	wilt	257.1	56
	might	213.6	125
	humbly	207.4	59
	may	172.3	228
	please	138	77
	upon	51	105
	help	26.3	102
<i>Thanking</i>	grateful	1682.1	392
	thank	662.7	169
	thankful	323.8	66
	gratitude	235.9	91
	express	215.2	69
<i>Requesting and Thanking</i>	for	1192.6	1128
	hearts	215.7	134
	messages	196.2	67
	love	138.5	229
	blessings	99.6	99
	blessing	83.6	68
	hear	78.3	57
	gospel	23.7	94

Category	Keyword	Keyness	Frequency
<i>Term of Reference</i>	Father	748.1	502
	Son	490.4	253
	beloved	246.3	112
	dear	228.1	108
	Jesus	211	329
	Monson	203.4	104
	heaven	194.1	124
	prophet	162.6	138
	prophets	154	87
	Christ	162.5	336
	Thomas	152.8	76
	Spirit	108.1	147
	Heavenly	102.4	131
	living	51.5	66
	apostles	53.8	58
President	36.9	123	
holy	20.8	91	
<i>Leave Taking</i>	amen	520.4	207
	name	317	225
	things	32.8	102
	say	25	50
	in	22.9	860
<i>Personal Pronominals</i>	thy	3335.5	726
	we	3165.7	2287
	thee	2337	506
	our	504.5	875
	thou	355.1	157
	us	275.2	501

Category	Keyword	Keyness	Frequency
<i>Reference to Current Time/ Place</i>	this	447.2	569
	session	411.6	101
	conference	397.9	159
	throughout	145.3	69
	general	104.2	83
	here	88.6	67
	those	82.2	182
	world	62.7	135
	these	52.7	130
	today	52.5	69
	earth	23.4	54
	day	21.5	113
	have	56.3	331
<i>Clausal Elaboration</i>	that	257	981
	re	557.8	122
	and	205.3	1921
	are	142.5	456
	be	122.8	462
	who	25.4	218