

Prayer Defined

In the Bible, the word “prayer” is found in 109 verses:

- **Old Testament:** 2Sa.7:27; 1Ki.8:28-29, 38, 45, 49, 54; 1Ki.9:3; 2Ki.19:4; 2Ki.20:5; 2Ch.6:19-20, 29, 35, 39-40; 2Ch.7:12, 15; 2Ch.30:27; 2Ch.33:18-19; Ne.1:6, 11; Ne.4:9; Ne.11:17; Job 15:4; Job 16:17; Job 22:27; Ps.4:1; Ps.5:3; Ps.6:9; Ps.17:1; Ps.35:13; Ps.39:12; Ps.42:8; Ps.54:2; Ps.55:1; Ps.61:1; Ps.64:1; Ps.65:2; Ps.66:19-20; Ps.69:13; Ps.72:15; Ps.80:4; Ps.84:8; Ps.86:1, 6; Ps.88:2, 13; Ps.90:1; Ps.102:1, 17; Ps.109:4, 7; Ps.141:2, 5; Ps.142:1; Ps.143:1; Pr.15:8, 29; Pr.28:9; Isa.1:15; Isa.26:16; Isa.37:4; Isa.38:5; Isa.56:7; Jer.7:16; Jer.11:14; La.3:8, 44; Da.9:3, 13, 17, 21; Jon.2:7; Hab.3:1;
- **New Testament:** Mt.17:21; Mt.21:13, 22; Mt.23:14; Mr.9:29; Mr.11:17; Lu.1:13; Lu.6:12; Lu.19:46; Lu.22:45; Ac.1:14; Ac.3:1; Ac.6:4; Ac.10:31; Ac.12:5; Ac.16:13, 16; Ro.10:1; Ro.12:12; 1Co.7:5; 2Co.1:11; 2Co.9:14; Eph.6:18; Php.1:4, 19; Php.4:6; Col.4:2; 1Ti.4:5; Jas.5:15-17; 1Pe.4:7

In the Greek language, prayer is found both as a noun (person, place, or thing) and a verb (action). What follows is a look at both sides of the word “Prayer” as used in the Bible.

Prayer (Verb)¹

Strong's Number: [2172](#) — **Greek:** *euchomai*

"to pray (to God)," is used with this meaning in [2Cr 13:7](#); [2Cr 13:9](#), RV, "pray" (AV, "wish"); [Jam 5:16](#); [3Jo 1:2](#), RV, "pray" (AV, wish). Even when the RV and AV translate by "I would," [Act 26:29](#), or "wished for," [Act 27:29](#) (RV, marg., "prayed"), or "could wish," [Rom 9:3](#) (RV, marg., "could pray"), the indication is that "prayer" is involved.

Strong's Number: [4336](#) — **Greek:** *proseuchomai*

"to pray," is always used of "prayer" to God, and is the most frequent word in this respect, especially in the Synoptists and Acts, once in [Rom 8:26](#); [Eph 6:18](#); [Phl 1:9](#); [1Ti 2:8](#); [Hbr 13:18](#); [Jud 1:20](#). For the injunction in [1Th 5:17](#), see [CEASE](#), C.

Strong's Number: [2065](#) — **Greek:** *erotao*

"to ask," is translated by the verb to pray in [Luk 14:18,19](#); 16:27; [Jhn 4:31](#); 14:16; 16:26; 17:9,15,20; in [Act 23:18](#), RV, "asked" (AV "prayed"); in [1Jo 5:16](#), RV, "should make request" (AV "shall pray"). See [ASK](#), A, No. 2.

Strong's Number: [1189](#) — **Greek:** *deomai*

"to desire," in [2Cr 5:20](#); 8:4, RV, "beseech" (AV, "pray"): see [BESEECH](#), No. 3. Notes: (1) Parakaleo, "to call to one's aid," is rendered by the verb "to pray" in the AV in the following: [Mat 26:53](#) (RV, "beseech"); so [Mar 5:17,18](#); [Act 16:9](#); in [Act 24:4](#), RV, "intreat"; in [Act 27:34](#), RV, "beseech." See [BESEECH](#), No. 1. (2) In [1Th 5:23](#); [2Ti 4:16](#), there is no word in the original for "I pray," see the RV.

¹ *Vine's Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words*

Prayer (Noun)²

Strong's Number: [2171](#) — **Greek:** *euche*

akin to A, No. 1, denotes "a prayer," [Jam 5:15](#); "a vow," [Act 18:18](#); 21:23. See [VOW](#).

Strong's Number: [4335](#) — **Greek:** *proseuche*

akin to A, No. 2, denotes (a) "prayer" (to God), the most frequent term, e.g., [Mat 21:22](#); [Luk 6:12](#), where the phrase is not to be taken literally as if it meant, "the prayer of God" (subjective genitive), but objectively, "prayer of God." In [Jam 5:17](#), "He prayed fervently," RV, is lit., "he prayed with prayer" (a Hebraistic form); in the following the word is used with No. 3: [Eph 6:18](#); [Phl 4:6](#); [1Ti 2:1](#); 5:5; (b) "a place of prayer," [Act 16:13](#), 16, a place outside the city wall, RV.

Strong's Number: [1162](#) — **Greek:** *deesis*

primarily "a wanting, a need" (akin to A, No. 4), then, "an asking, entreaty, supplication," in the NT is always addressed to God and always rendered "supplication" or "supplications" in the RV; in the AV "prayer," or "prayers," in [Luk 1:13](#); 2:37; 5:33; [Rom 10:1](#); [2Cr 1:11](#); 9:14; [Phl 1:4](#) (in the 2nd part, "request"); 1:19; [2Ti 1:3](#); [Hbr 5:7](#); [Jam 5:16](#); [1Pe 3:12](#).

Strong's Number: [1783](#) — **Greek:** *enteuxis*

is translated "prayer" in [1Ti 4:5](#); see [INTERCESSION](#). Notes: (1) *Proseuche* is used of "prayer" in general; *deesis* stresses the sense of need; it is used sometimes of request from man to man. (2) In the papyri *enteuxis* is the regular word for a petition to a superior. For the synonymous word *aitema* see [PETITION](#); for *hiketeria*, [Hbr 5:7](#), see [SUPPLICATION](#). (3) "Prayer is properly addressed to God the Father [Mat 6:6](#); [Jhn 16:23](#); [Eph 1:17](#); 3:14, and the Son, [Act 7:59](#); [2Cr 12:8](#); but in no instance in the NT is prayer addressed to the Holy Spirit distinctively, for whereas the Father is in Heaven, [Mat 6:9](#), and the Son is at His right hand, [Rom 8:34](#), the Holy Spirit is in and with the believers, [Jhn 14:16](#), 17. "Prayer is to be offered in the Name of the Lord Jesus, [Jhn 14:13](#), that is, the prayer must accord with His character, and must be presented in the same spirit of dependence and submission that marked Him, [Mat 11:26](#); [Luk 22:42](#). "The Holy Spirit, being the sole interpreter of the needs of the human heart, makes His intercession therein; and inasmuch as prayer is impossible to man apart from His help, [Rom 8:26](#), believers are exhorted to pray at all seasons in the Spirit, [Eph 6:18](#); cp. [Jud 1:20](#); [Jam 5:16](#), the last clause of which should probably be read 'the inwrought [i.e., by the Holy Spirit] supplication of righteous man availeth much' (or 'greatly prevails' *ischuo*, as in [Act 19:16](#), 20). "None the less on this account is the understanding to be engaged in prayer, [1Cr 14:15](#), and the will, [Col 4:12](#); [Act 12:5](#) (where 'earnestly' is, lit., 'stretched out') and so in [Luk 22:44](#). "Faith is essential to prayer, [Mat 21:22](#); [Mar 11:24](#); [Jam 1:5-8](#), for faith is the recognition of, and the committal of ourselves and our matters to, the faithfulness of God. "Where the Jews were numerous, as at Thessalonica, they had usually a Synagogue, [Act 17:1](#); where they were few, as at Philippi, they had merely a *proseuche*, or 'place of prayer,' of much smaller dimensions, and commonly built by a river for the sake of the water necessary to the preliminary ablutions prescribed by Rabbinic tradition, [Act 16:13](#), 16." * [* From Notes on Thessalonians by Hogg and Vine, pp. 189, 190.]

² *Vine's Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words*