**Prayer**

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.****— Ephesians 6:18***

The most common Greek word translated “prayer” in the New Testament is the word *proseuche* (pros-yoo'-khom-ahee). This particular word and its various forms is used approximately 127 times in the New Testament. It is the word that Paul uses in Ephesians 6:18, when he says, “Praying always with all prayer.…” The word “prayer” in this verse is a translation of the word *proseuche*. The word *proseuche* is a compound of the words *pros* and *euche*. The word *pros* is a preposition that means *toward*, and it can denote *a sense of closeness*. For example, one scholar says the word *pros* is used to portray the intimate relationship that exists between the members of the Godhead. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God.…” The word “with” is taken from the word *pros*. By using this word to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is telling us that theirs is an intimate relationship. One translation of the verse is, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *face to face* with God.…”

Nearly everywhere it is used in the New Testament, the word *pros* carries the meaning of *close, up-front, intimate contact with someone else*.

The second part of the word *proseuche* is taken from the word *euche*. The word *euche* is an old Greek word that describes *a wish, desire, prayer*, or *vow*. It was originally used to depict a person who made some kind of vow to God because of some need or desire in his or her life. This individual would vow to give something of great value to God in exchange for a favorable answer to prayer.

A perfect illustration of this word can be found in the Old Testament story of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Hannah deeply desired a child but was not able to become pregnant. Out of great desperation and anguish of spirit, she prayed and made a solemn vow to the Lord. First Samuel 1:11 tells us, “And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life….”

First Samuel 1:19,20 goes on to tell us, “And they [Elkanah and his wife Hannah] rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son….”

In exchange for God’s gift of this son, Hannah vowed that her young boy would be devoted to the work of the ministry. By making this commitment, she gave her most valued and prized possession in exchange for answered prayer. Technically, this was a *euche* — she made a vow to give something to God in exchange for answered prayer.

In Greek culture, before prayer was verbalized and offered to a “god,” a commemorative altar was set up and thanksgiving was offered on that altar. Such offerings of praise and thanksgiving were called *votive offerings* (from the word “vow”). These votive offerings were similar to a pledge. The person would promise that once his prayer had been answered, he would be back to give additional thanksgiving to God. These votive offerings of praise and worship were elaborate and well-planned. Giving thanks to a deity was a significant event, so it was done in a serious and grandiose manner to outwardly demonstrate a thankful heart.

All of this is included in the background of the word *proseuche*, the word used more than any other for “prayer” in the New Testament. Keep in mind, the majority of Paul’s readers were Greek in origin and knew the cultural background of this word; hence, they understood its full ramifications. *What a picture of prayer this is!*

This tells us several important things about prayer. First, the word *proseuche* tells us that prayer should bring us face to face and into close contact with God. Prayer is more than a mechanical act or a formula to follow; it is a vehicle to bring us to a place whereby we may enjoy *a close, intimate relationship with God*.

The idea of *sacrifice* is also associated with this word for “prayer.” It portrayed an individual who desired to see his prayer answered so desperately that he was willing to surrender everything he owned in exchange for answered prayer. Clearly, this describes an altar of sacrifice and consecration in prayer whereby a believer’s life is yielded entirely to God.

Although the Holy Spirit may convict our hearts of areas that need to be surrendered to His sanctifying power, He will never forcibly take anything from us. Thus, this particular word for prayer tells of a place of decision, a place of consecration, an altar where we freely vow to give our lives to God in exchange for His life. Because the word *proseuche* carries this meaning of surrender and sacrifice, we can know that God obviously desires to do more than merely bless us — He wants to change us! He wants us to come to a place of consecration where we meet with Him face to face and surrender every area of our lives to Him, and in exchange, we are touched and changed by His power and Presence.

*Thanksgiving* was also a vital part of this common word for “prayer.” This tells us that genuine prayer, when offered in faith, will include thanksgiving to God in advance for hearing and answering the prayer. Thus, when we come to the Lord in prayer, it is imperative that we never stop short of thanking Him for answering our prayers and requests before we ever see the answers manifested.

I think you can see that the word for “prayer” used most often in the New Testament is more than simply a prayer request. This word demands *surrender*, *consecration*, and *thanksgiving* from us. The idea of the word *proseuche* is this: *“Come face to face with God, and surrender your life in exchange for His. Maintain an attitude of consecration as an ongoing part of your life, and be sure to give Him thanks in advance for moving on your behalf.…”*

## **My Prayer for Today**

*Lord, I come before You right now with the specific petition that is on my heart. I know that You want to answer my prayers and fulfill my requests, but You also want me to surrender more of myself to You. Before I ask You to meet my needs today, I first want to consecrate myself more fully to You. Forgive me for hanging on to parts of my life that I’ve needed to surrender to You. Right now I yield these areas of my life to You, and I ask You in exchange to please fill me with more of You. I thank You in advance for answering that prayer. I also thank You for hearing my specific prayer request and for fulfilling the needs I am confronted with today.*

**I pray this in Jesus’ name!**

sparking gems from the greek

## **My Confession for Today**

*I confess that I am surrendered and yielded to the Lord. Every part of my life is becoming more yielded to Him every day. As the Holy Spirit shows me areas that I need to release to Him, I do it quickly and without delay. Because I have given my life to Him, He is filling me with more and more of Himself. He hears me when I pray; He accepts my thanksgiving; and He fulfills the needs that I present to Him today!*

**I declare this by faith in Jesus’ name!**

sparking gems from the greek

## **Questions to Answer**

1. How often do you come before the Lord for a time of intimate prayer and worship? Do you set aside time to spend with God once a day, a couple of times a week — or do you only experience His Presence during worship when you attend church services?

2. Can you recall a time when God dealt with your heart about something you needed to yield to Him? When you finally relinquished it into His hands, how quickly did you experience an answer to your specific prayer requests?

3. Is there anything you need to yield to the Lord in your life right now? Write down whatever comes to mind that you need to release to Him

Spirit Guided Prayer

Watching in the Spirit

Being a Watcher