

# Infinitives

## Chapter 11

# Infinitives

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ  
λόγος

## Overview & the Article

Infinitives are **verbal nouns** and are found about 2,300 times in the NT. Like other non-indicative moods, the infinitive is negated by **μή** (not **οὐ**).

Because infinitives are verbal nouns, they often come with an **article** (which is always **neuter singular**). The subject of the infinitive is in the **accusative case**.

# Infinitives Forms

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	Infinitive	Translation
Pres Act	λύ <b>ειν</b>	to be loosing
Pres Mid/Pass	λύ <b>εσθαι</b>	to loose oneself to be loosed
Aor Act	λύ <b>σαι</b>	to loose
Aor Mid	λύ <b>σασθαι</b>	to loose oneself
Aor Pass	λυ <b>θῆναι</b>	to be loosed

# Perfect Infinitives

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Perfect infinitives are not common in the NT, only occurring 49 times (with about 30 different verbs).

Active	λελυ <b>κέναι</b>	to have loosed
Mid Pass	λελύ <b>σθαι</b>	to have loosed oneself to have been loosed

Notice: the middle or passive form drops the variable vowel.

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## Infinitives = Verbal Nouns

As a **noun**, an infinitive can function as the **subject**, predicate, or the direct object of a verb.

ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ **ζῆν** Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ **ἀποθανεῖν** κέρδος

“As for me, **to live** [is] Christ and **to die** [is] gain”

The infinitives are subjects of predicate statements.

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## Infinitives = Verbal Nouns

ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ **ζῆν** Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ **ἀποθανεῖν** κέρδος

Because infinitives are verbal **nouns**, they may have gender, case and number. Infinitives are regarded as **neuter** and as **singular**.

Thus, infinitives may be modified by the neuter singular articles: **τό**, **τοῦ**, or **τῷ** (= articular infinitive)

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### Infinitives = Verbal Nouns

As a **verb**, infinitives may take subjects, objects, indirect objects, adverbs, and prepositional phrases. The **subject** of an infinitive is expressed in the **accusative case**.

**δεῖ αὐτὸν ἀποκτανθῆναι**

“It is necessary that **he be killed**”  
 (Rev 11:5).

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## Adverbial Infinitives

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### Complementary

An anarthrous (without an article) infinitive “completes” another verb. This is the most common use.

**καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν**

We also **ought to love** one another  
 (1 John 4:11 NASB)

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### Purpose

Communicates the goal or intent of an action or state expressed by the controlling verb. It may be communicated by and infinitive alone, εἰς τό + inf, πρὸς τό + inf, τοῦ + inf, or ὥστε + inf.

**μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον**

Don’t think that I came **to abolish** the Law  
 (Matt 5:17).

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### Result

Communicates the actual or conceived result of an action or state expressed by the controlling verb. It is usually expressed by ὥστε + inf.

**ἔπλησαν ἀμφότερα τὰ πλοῖα ὥστε βυθίζεσθαι αὐτά**

they . . . filled both the boats, **so that they began to sink** (Luke 5:7 ESV).

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### Temporal: Previous Time

The action of the infinitive occurs **before** the action of the controlling verb (μετὰ τό + infinitive).

**μετὰ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν**

**After John was arrested**, Jesus went to Galilee  
 (Mark 1:14).

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**Temporal: Contemporaneous Time**

The action of the infinitive occurs *simultaneously* with the action of the controlling verb (ἐν τῷ + infinitive).

ἐν τῷ σπείρειν αὐτὸν ἃ μὲν ἔπεσεν παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν

As he sowed, some seed fell along the path  
(Matt 13:4).

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**Temporal: Subsequent Time**

The action of the infinitive occurs *after* the action of the controlling verb (πρὸ τοῦ or πρὶν [ῆ] + infinitive).

πρὸ τοῦ σε Φίλιππον φωνῆσαι . . . εἰδὼν σε

Before Philip called you . . . I saw you  
(John 1:48).

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**Cause**

Communicates the reason or ground for the action of the controlling verb, answering "Why?" (διὰ τό + infinitive).

οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς

You do not have because you do not ask  
(Jas 4:2).

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**Means**

Conveys the way in which the action of the controlling verb is performed, answering "How?" (ἐν τῷ + infinitive).

ὁ θεὸς . . . ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εὐλογοῦντα ὑμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἀποστρέφειν ἕκαστον ἀπὸ τῶν πονηριῶν ὑμῶν

God . . . sent him . . . to you to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways (Acts 3:26).

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Substantival Infinitives

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**Subject**

Functions as the subject (or predicate nominative) of a finite verb.

τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος

to live is Christ, and to die is gain  
(Phil 1:21 ESV).

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**Direct Object**

Functions as the direct object of a finite verb.

ὁ πατήρ . . . τῷ υἱῷ ἔδωκεν ζωὴν **ἔχειν** ἐν ἑαυτῷ

The Father . . . has granted to the Son **to have** life in Himself (John 5:26).

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**Indirect Discourse**

Used with verbs of speaking or perception to communicate indirect discourse.

καὶ ἀπεκρίθησαν μὴ **εἰδέναι** πόθεν

So **they answered** that **they did** not **know** where it came from (Luke 20:7 ESV).

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**Explanatory**

Further defines, clarifies or qualifies a noun or adjective.

ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ **γενέσθαι**

He gave them the right **to be** children of God (John 1:12).

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**Independent Infinitives**

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**Imperative**

Functions as an imperative (or hortatory subjunctive).

**χαίρειν** μετὰ χαιρόντων

**Rejoice** with those who rejoice (Rom 12:15).

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**Absolute**

Functions independently of the rest of the sentence, having no syntactical relation to other words or phrases.

Ἰάκωβος ... ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ **χαίρειν**

James ... To the twelve tribes dispersed abroad. **Greetings** (Jas 1:1).

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