

Chapter 18

The Present Imperative

18.1 We have learned how to use a verb to make a statement (the Indicative).

Now we will learn how to use a verb to give a command - the Imperative (Latin - "imperator" - Emperor, commander) e.g. "Come here!" "Go away!" "Be quiet!"

18.2 The Present Stem of the Verb

The Present Stem of the verb in Greek is used not only for describing an action that is going on at the present time, but for actions that go on over a period of time (continuously), or repeatedly.

English no longer makes a clear distinction between "do something" (once) and "be doing something" (in process). So we usually translate the Present Imperative as "do something".

Greek has a way of showing if something is to be done just once - we will meet that form of the verb later.

18.3 The basic pattern for the Second Person Present Imperative Active is

you (singular) (do something, be doing something)! STEM-**ε**
you (plural) (do something, be doing something)! STEM-**ετε**

For λέγω, this becomes

Say!, Speak! (one person) λέγε
Say!, Speak! (several people) λέγετε

You probably noticed that the ending for the Second Person Plural Present Imperative Active is the same as that of the Second Person Plural Present Indicative Active.

The rest of the sentence usually helps us to decide how to translate a verb with an **-ετε** ending.

Contract verbs obey the rules for combining vowels which we met for the present tense

α + ε = α **ε + ε = ει** **ο + ε = ου**

Practice - until you can read and translate easily

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| 1. ἀγαπάτε ἀλλήλους. | Love one another! |
| 2. ποιεῖτε ταῦτα. | Do these things! |
| 3. ἀκολουθεῖ μοι. | Follow (after) me! |
| 4. ζητεῖτε τὸν κύριον. | Seek the Lord! |
| 5. πίστευε τῷ Ἰησοῦ. | Believe in Jesus! |
| 6. προσκυνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ. | Worship (bow down to) God! |
| 7. διακονεῖτε τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς. | Serve (be of service to) the brothers! |
| 8. ὑπακούε τῷ Μεσσία. | Obey (be obedient to) the Messiah! |
| 9. λαμβάνετε τὰς χήρας. | Receive the widows! |
| 10. διδάσκετε τὰ τεκνία. | Teach the (little) children! |

18.4 Frequently occurring Imperatives

ἰδοῦ (look!), **ἴδετε** (look!), **δεῦτε** (come!), **θάρσει** (take heart! don't be scared!), **ὑπάγε** (go!)
ἰδοῦ (singular), **ἴδε** (singular) and **ἴδετε** (plural) are imperatives of one of the verbs for "look, behold". Greek is similar to English, in that "Look" may be used in the senses of "Lo and behold!" or "Look - pay attention!"

δεῦτε, "here", is an adverb which is used as the command "Come here!"

θάρσει (singular) and **θαρσεῖτε** (plural), "take heart", are the only forms of the verb **θαρσέω** (I am courageous) which are used in the New Testament.

ὑπάγε, "go, go away" is an Imperative singular of **ὑπάγω**, "I go away"

Practice A - ἰδοῦ - until you can read and translate easily

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| 1. Ἴδου ἐγὼ εἰμι ὃν ζητεῖτε. | Behold, I am he whom you seek. (Acts 10:21)) |
| 2. καὶ ἰδοῦ ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι . . . | Behold, I am with you . . . (Matt. 28:20) |
| 3. καὶ ἰδοῦ φωνὴ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν . . . | And behold, a voice from heaven . . . (Matt. 3:17) |
| 4. Ἴδου ἡ δούλη τοῦ κυρίου. | Behold, the servant girl of the Lord. (Luke 1:38) |
| 5. ἰδοῦ μυστήριον ὑμῖν λέγω. | Behold, I tell you a mystery. (1 Corinth. 15:51) |
| 6. Ἴδου ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω ὑμᾶς
ὡς πρόβατα . | Behold, I send you (out)
like sheep . . . (Matt. 10:16) |
| 7. Ἴδου ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν
μου πρὸ προσώπου σου. | Behold, I send my messenger
before your face. (Matt. 11:10) |
| 8. ἰδοῦ νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας. | Behold, now (is) the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2) |
| 9. Ἴδου ἀναβαίνομεν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα . . . | Behold, we go up to Jerusalem . . . (Matt. 20:18) |
| 10. καὶ ὁ Πιλάτος λέγει αὐτοῖς,
Ἴδου ὁ ἄνθρωπος. | And Pilate says to them,
"Behold, the man." (see John 19:5) |

Practice B - until you can read and translate easily

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| 1. Δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον . . . | Come, see a man . . . (John 4:29) |
| 2. Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ . . . | Behold the Lamb of God. (John 1:36) |
| 3. καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς,
Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου. | And he says to them,
"Come after (follow) me." (Matt. 4:19) |
| 4. δεῦτε εἰς τοὺς γάμους. | Come to the marriage (feasts) (Matt. 22:4) |
| 5. δεῦτε ἴδετε τὸν τόπον . . . | Come, see the place . . . (Matt. 28:6) |
| 6. καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν
τῷ παραλυτικῷ, Θάρσει, τέκνον. | And Jesus said to the paralytic,
"Take heart, lad.:" (Matt. 9:2) |
| 7. ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς,
Θαρσεῖτε, ἐγὼ εἰμι. | Jesus says to them,
"Take heart, it is I." (see Matt. 14:27) |
| 8. καὶ φωνοῦσιν τὸν τυφλὸν καὶ
λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Θάρσει, . . .
φωνεῖ σε. | And they call the blind man and
say to him, "Take heart . .
he is calling you." (see Mark 10:49) |
| 9. τότε λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς,
Ἵπαγε, Σατανᾶ. | Then Jesus says to him,
"Go away, Satan." (Matt. 4:10) |
| 10. λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἵπαγε εἰς
τὸν οἶκόν σου πρὸς τοὺς σοῦς. | He says to him, "Go to your house
and to your folks. (Mark 5:19) |
- (τοὺς σοῦς = the ones belonging to you)*

18.5 Prohibitions - How to say No

Greek has several ways of saying "Don't (do something)." One way is to use a negative word with the Present Imperative, in which case the implication is "Stop (doing something)". For all parts of the verb other than the Indicative, Greek uses **μὴ** for "no, not". Greek uses **οὐ** for the Indicative only.

Some times it is important to make a distinction in the translation between continuous and single action - for example, in John 20:17, when Mary Magdalene meets the risen Christ, many of the English versions translate his words as "Don't touch me!", which sounds as if he is forbidding Mary Magdalene to reach out and touch him. The Greek uses a Present Imperative with **μὴ** (*μὴ μου ἅπτου* - from the verb *ἅπτομαι*, which has a different set of endings than the -ω verbs). A better translation would be "Don't continue to touch - cling to - me.", which gives the picture of her already having thrown her arms around him.

Note : The simple prohibition "Don't (do something)", and the way of saying "Don't start (to do something)" use the Aorist tense of the verb which we will meet later.

Practice - until you can read and translate easily

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| 1. μὴ βάλλε λίθους εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν. | Stop throwing stones into the sea. |
| 2. μὴ διώκετε τοὺς ὀφειλέτας. | Stop persecuting the debtors. |
| 3. μὴ δίδασκε τὴν ἀδικίαν τοῖς μαθηταῖς. | Stop teaching unrighteousness to the disciples. |

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| 4. μὴ βλασφημεῖτε τὸν θεόν. | Stop blaspheming God. |
| 5. μὴ ζῆτει τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς ἁμαρτίας. | Stop seeking the way of sin. |
| 6. μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον. | Stop loving the world. |
| 7. μὴ πλάνα τὰ παῖδια. | Stop leading the children astray. |
| 8. μὴ ποιεῖτε ταῦτα τὰ ἔργα τὰ ἀδίκια. | Stop doing these unrighteous things. |
| 9. μὴ τήρει τὸ ἀργύριον. | Stop holding on to the money. |
| 10. μὴ κλαίετε. | Stop weeping. |

NOTE : Sections 18.6 and 18.7 may be postponed until later in the course.

18.6 Third Person Present Imperative Active

Modern English only uses Second Person Imperatives, "You - do something!" and "Y'all - do something!". Greek also uses Third Person Imperatives, "Let him - do something!" and "Let them - do something!" with the sense of a command rather than mere permission to do something - "He must do something".

The basic pattern for the Third Person Present Imperative Active is

Let him/her/it, He/she/it must (do something, be doing something)! **STEM-ετω**

Let them, They must (do something, be doing something)! **STEM-ετωσαν**

For λέγω, this becomes

Let him/her/it speak! He must speak! **λεγέτω**

Let them speak! They must speak! **λεγέτωσαν**

Contract verbs follow the rules of contraction, α + ε = α ε + ε = ει ο + ε = ου

Practice - until you can read and translate easily

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| 1. λεγέτωσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. | Let them speak the truth. |
| 2. ἀγαπάτω τοὺς ἀδελφούς. | Let him love the brothers. |
| 3. ἀκολουθεῖτωσαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ. | Let them follow Jesus. |
| 4. μὴ ποιεῖτω τὰ κακά. | Let him stop doing (the) bad (things). |
| 5. μὴ διακονεῖτωσαν τῷ πονηρῷ. | Let them stop serving the evil (one). |
| 6. ἐγγίζετω τῷ ἁγίῳ ἱερῷ. | Let him approach the holy temple. |
| 7. προσκυνεῖτωσαν οἱ ἅγιοι τῷ θεῷ. | Let the saints worship God. |
| 8. ὑπακουέτω ὁ δοῦλος τῷ κυρίῳ αὐτοῦ. | Let the slave obey his master. |
| 9. μὴ ἀκολουθεῖτωσαν τῷ διαβόλῳ
μηδὲ ὑπακουέτωσαν αὐτῷ. | Let them neither follow the devil
nor obey him. |
| 10. διακονεῖτω ὁ μαθητὴς τῷ θεῷ
καὶ ὑπακουέτω αὐτῷ. | Let the disciple serve God
and obey Him. |

18.7 Imperatives of εἰμί

The Imperatives of εἰμί are given here for reference, but you will not find many examples in the GNT.

Greek usually uses Imperatives from another verb (γίνομαι - I become) instead of Imperatives of εἰμί.

You (singular) be!	ἴσθι	(note the iota)
You (plural) be!	ἔστε	
Let him/her/it be!	ἔστω	
Let them be!	ἔστωσαν	

Practice - until you can read and translate easily

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|---|---|
| 1. ἔστω δὲ ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν ναὶ ναί, οὐ, οὐ. | Let your word be yes - Yes, no - No. (Matt. 5:37) |
| 2. διάκονοι ἔστωσαν πιστοί. | Let the deacons be faithful. |
| 3. ὁ ἄγγελος λέγει τῷ Ἰωσήφ,
Φεῦγε εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ ἴσθι ἐκεῖ. | The angel says to Joseph,
"Flee (in)to Egypt and be (stay) there."
(see Matt. 2:13) |
| 4. ὕπαγε εἰς εἰρήνην, καὶ ἴσθι ὑγιής. | Go in peace, and be healed . . (see Mark 5:34) |

18.11 Vocabulary to learn

NOTE : The Verbs in the first section of this Vocabulary take the Dative rather than the Accusative.

It is best to learn them in a form which sets us up to expect a Dative.

ἀκολουθέω	I follow after	(takes Dative)	
	(an acolyte follows the leader of a worship Service)		
διακονέω	I am of service to, I serve	(takes Dative)	(ὁ διάκονος - servant)
ἐγγίζω	I draw near to, I approach	(takes Dative)	(ἐγγύς - near)
ἔξεστιν	It is lawful to . . . , it is allowed . .	(takes Dative)	
ἐπιτιμάω	I give a command to, I order	(takes Dative)	
μαρτυρέω	I bear witness to	(takes Dative)	
	(the martyrs were willing to die for their witness to Christ)		
παραγγέλλω	I give a command to, I order strictly	(takes Dative)	
πιστεύω	I trust in, I believe in	(takes Dative)	(πιστός - faithful)
προσκυνέω	I bow down before, I worship	(takes Dative)	
ὑπακούω	I am subject to, I obey	(takes Dative)	(from ὑπό + ἀκούω)

The following verbs do not take a Dative

δοκιμάζω	I test, I examine, I discern	
εὐχαριστέω	I give thanks	(hence "Eucharist")
	(In modern Greek, one says εὐχαριστῶ - pronounced eff-harr-EES-toe - for "thank you")	
θαρσέω	I take courage	(In the New Testament, used only as the Imperative - θάρσει)
ἴδε, ἴδετε, ἰδοῦ	Look!, Behold! Lo!	
κατέχω	I hold fast, I keep, I possess	(from κατά + ἔχω - I have)
κλέπτω	I steal	(ὁ κλέπτης - thief. Hence "kleptomaniac")
ὑπάγω	I go away	(from ὑπό + ἄγω - I lead)
φεύγω	I flee	(hence fugitive)
χαίρω	I rejoice	
μή	no, not	(used with verbs in any form other than the Indicative)
μηδέ	neither, nor	(μή + δέ, used with verbs in any form other than the Indicative)
οὔδέ . . οὔδέ	neither . . nor	(οὐ + δέ, used with verbs in the Indicative)
οὔτε . . οὔτε	neither . . nor	(οὐ + τέ, used with verbs in the Indicative)
οὐχί	certainly not	
	(used with verbs in the Indicative, also used with questions when one expects the answer "Yes")	
οὐ μή	NO, NOT	(emphatic negative)
τέ	and, so	(less strong than καί, sometimes better not translated, as for δέ)
τέ . . τέ, τέ . . δέ	both . . and, not only . . but also	
ἐκεῖ	there	
ὅπου	where	
ποῦ ;	where? whither?	
πάντοτε	at all times, always	(from πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν - each, all, every + τότε - then)
ὀπίσω	after, behind	(Adverb, or Preposition taking Genitive)
ὁ αἰών	age, aeon	(do not attempt to use other cases yet)
ὁ ἀμνός	lamb	
ὑγιής	healthy, whole, sound	(hence "hygiene" and related words)