

How to Study and Interpret the Bible

Word Study Exercise

Study Text

John 21:15-17 NASU

15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you **love** Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I **love** You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."

16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you **love** Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I **love** You." He said to him, " Shepherd My sheep."

17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you **love** Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you **love** Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I **love** You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Concordance Search

The following is an excerpt from the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible:

do you / Me more than these?"	Jn 21:15	25
You know that I / You."	Jn 21:15	5368
"Simon, son of John, do you / Me?"	Jn 21:16	25
You know that I / You."	Jn 21:16	5368
"Simon, son of John, do you / Me?"	Jn 21:17	5368
the third time, "Do you / Me?"	Jn 21:17	5368
You know that I / You."	Jn 21:17	5368

Note: Numbers in regular font refer to the Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary located in the back of your concordance; numbers in *italic* font refer to the Greek Dictionary in the back of your concordance.

Concordance Dictionary Search

25. αγαπαω **agapaō**; of unc. or.; *to love*: - beloved (7), Beloved (1), felt a love (1), love (80), loved (34), loves (20).

5368. φιλεω **phileō**; from 5384; *to love*: - kiss (3), love (13), loved (3), loves (6).

5384. φιλος **philos**; a prim. word; *beloved, dear, friendly*; - friend (12), friends (17).

The following is an excerpt from the New Bible Dictionary, Second Edition, article under the caption LOVE, BELOVED:

II. In the New Testament

a. Etymology

The commonest Gk. word in the NT for all forms of love is *agapē*, *agapaō*. This is one of the least frequent words in classical Greek, where it expresses, on the few occasions it occurs, that highest and noblest form of love which sees something infinitely precious in its object. Its use in the NT derives not directly from classical Greek so much as from the LXX, where it occurs in 95% of all cases where EVV translate the Hebrew by 'love', and in every case of love from God to man, man to God and man to his neighbour. The dignity which the word possesses in the NT has been contributed by its use as a vehicle of the OT revelation. It is pregnant with OT associations.

phileō is the alternative word to *agapaō*. It is more naturally used of intimate affection (Jn. 11:3, 36; Rev. 3:19), and of liking to do things which are pleasant (Mt. 6:5), though there is considerable overlapping of usage between the two words. Much exegesis of Jn. 21:15-17 has turned on Peter's willingness to say *philō se* ('I am your friend', J. B. Phillips), and apparent reluctance to say *agapō se*. It is difficult to see why a writer of such simple Greek as John should have used the two words in this context unless he intended a distinction to be drawn between their meanings. The existence of any clear distinction, here or elsewhere, is, however, seriously disputed by scholars, and is not noticed by ancient commentators, except perhaps by Ambrose (*On Luke* 10. 176) and in the Vulg., which in this passage employs *diligo* and *amo* to translate *agapaō* and *phileō* respectively. (B. B. Warfield, 'The Terminology of Love in the New Testament', *PTR* 16, 1918; J. H. Bernard, *St John*, ICC, 2, 1928, pp. 701ff.)

Results

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15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you **love (agapao)** Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I **love (phileo)** You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."

16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you **love (agapao)** Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I **love (phileo)** You." He said to him, " Shepherd My sheep."

17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you **love (phileo)** Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you **love (phileo)** Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I **love (phileo)** You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

