

## THE WHY AND HOW OF PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

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### Lesson 9

#### REVIEW:

The importance of words cannot be overemphasized. Thus the Old Testament says, "How forceful (powerful) are right words" (Job 6:25a); and "a word fitly spoken" is likened to "apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11). The New Testament states that "of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). The third chapter of the Book of James equates spiritual maturity with control of the tongue: "...If any man (one) offend not in word, the same is a perfect man (mature person), and able also to bridle the whole body" (Jas. 3:2). As we grow in grace and knowledge, we must let the Word of God become the bit and bridle in our life!

Our first word study concerns the word LOGOS (λόγος). We saw Christ as the Living Word, the expression of the divine thought, the personification of grace and truth. We noted the mechanics of word study; and we took up STRUCTURAL DIAGRAMMING of a verse. We focused-on a passage, then on a verse, and finally, on a word! In that manner we completed **the first type of word study--the study of words within the unit of a verse or sentence.**

#### APPROACH:

Today we are going into the second type of word study--**the study of individual words.** I say "WORDS" because there are actually four words in the Greek language for our English word "LOVE."

#### OUTLINE:

##### I. WORD STUDY: LOVE

##### A. FOUR LITTLE WORDS

##### B. THEIR MEANING

##### C. THEIR OCCURRENCE IN SCRIPTURE

1. "PHILEO" (φιλέω).
2. "AGAPAO" (ἀγαπάω).

## II. REPERCUSSION OF LOVE

### A. THE LOVE OF GOD

1. Toward Mankind.
2. Toward the believer.

### C. THE LOVE OF THE BELIEVER

1. Toward God.
2. Toward other believers.
3. Toward unbelievers.

## I. WORD STUDY: LOVE

What is your definition of love, and what is your concept of love? The meaning which you give the term will decide whether you use the word carefully or carelessly! One can hardly equate one's love for a person with one's love for a food or a dress or a play; yet we frequently say, "Oh, I just LOVE chocolate cake," or, "I really LOVE your dress!" Is it because we are too lazy to think of other descriptive words to indicate our likes or dislikes, or do we simply lack a good vocabulary? We could say, "I think your dress is most becoming." We could say that chocolate cake is among our favorite desserts. We could, but we don't, because we can't be bothered!

Because the Greek language is a very precise language, words have specific meanings, a fact which led to the coining of this proverb: "THE GREEKS HAD A WORD FOR IT." Indeed, the Greeks had FOUR LITTLE WORDS FOR LOVE. Let's take them in their verb form.

**A. Four little words.** The first word for love is "**ERAO**" (ἐράω). Kenneth S. Wuest, in his book, **Word Studies**, defines this type of love as a "**love based on passion**", either good or bad. The context would determine the motivation. This is the Greek word from which we get such words as "erotic, eroticism, erotomania." Doubtless, this term is derived from the Greek god, EROS, whom the Greeks worshiped as the god of love. He was thought to be the son of Aphrodite and Hermes. As you can well imagine, this Greek word is not found in the inspired New Testament!

The second word is "**STERGO**" (στέργω). This word is used of natural love, such as would exist between parents and children. Try as you might, you will not find this word in the New Testament. Certainly, it is out of place in such verses as John 3:16. Here is the reason: the unsaved are not God's children. Therefore, the word would hardly do in context.

Of the two remaining words, the first is "**PHILEO**" (φιλέω; noun: PHILIA, φιλία; translated "friendship" in Jas. 4:4, but meaning "affection, fondness, love"); the second is "**AGAPAO**" (ἀγαπάω; noun: AGAPE, ἀγάπη). Both are found in the Greek New Testament because they best serve to convey the truth.

We ask, are these two words synonymous? Can they be used interchangeably since they are both rendered "to love" in our English Bible? The Greek Lexicon lists **PHILEO** as meaning: "to manifest some act or token of kindness or affection, to love, to regard with affection, to like, to be fond of or delight in a thing." It can also mean "to cherish inordinately, to set store by." As always, the context will determine the correct meaning.

**AGAPAO**, on the other hand, is said to mean "to love, to value, esteem, feel or manifest generous concern for, be faithful towards, to delight in, to set store upon."

### **B. Their meaning.**

Although the definitions overlap to some degree, the fact that the Holy Spirit uses these words with utmost care shows us that they are NOT IDENTICAL. But what do they signify?

**"PHILEO" means "to love because of the pleasure one takes in the object loved." Sample verse: John 5:20, "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things..."**

**"AGAPAO" means "to love because of the preciousness of the object loved." Sample verse: John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son..."**

Do you see why PHILEO would be out of place in John 3:16? God simply cannot take pleasure in sinful mankind; He abhors sin wherever sin is found! On the other hand, He can and does take pleasure in His Son, for Christ could truthfully say, "I do always those things that please him (the Father)" (John 8:29).

You can see now why the choice of **AGAPAO in John 3:16** is an excellent one; God so loved sinful man because He sets a high value on the human soul, created in His own image!

**C. Their occurrence in Scripture.** We began our word study in the Book of John; let us stay with John a bit longer. As you know, John's background was in Judaism. His own concept of the LOGOS was deeply rooted in his Jewish heritage. His native language was Aramaic, which was the language of Israel after the captivity--Chaldee as spoken by the Jews. Naturally, he thought in his own tongue; yet, John wrote in Greek. That meant he must rethink what he was about to put in writing, and he must find the word which best expressed what he was trying to convey.

As a rule, we would be far more careful in our choice of words in the use of a language we had acquired than we would in our native tongue. We would wonder, does it really mean what I want it to say? Keep this in mind as we look up the mention of PHILEO and AGAPAO, both of which occur in one classic passage--**John 21:15-17**.

Note again that we must get our bearing before we can focus on our passage. **The setting for verses 15-17 is one of the post-resurrection appearances** of the Lord Jesus Christ; **the locale, the Sea of Tiberias**, better known to us as the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1). Next, we are introduced to **those present** at that time: **Simon Peter, Thomas** (called Dydimus--the Twin), **Nathanael, James, John**, and **two other disciples**, not named--seven men in all (v.2). Verse 3 states **the occasion**: Peter had been accepted by common consent as the new leader of the disciples. He was strong and resolute, ready to act, ready to speak up; he was a natural leader. So, when Peter announced that he would "go a fishing" they agreed to go with him (v. 3).

What's wrong with a fishing trip, some will ask. Ordinarily, nothing! But this was no ordinary day off from the usual routine. Peter had become discouraged. Nearly forty days had passed since the Lord's resurrection, and still nothing earth-shaking had taken place. Fishing for men seemed such a thankless task, and a dangerous one. True, he and the others had been called and taught by the Lord Himself; they had been commissioned to preach the Gospel to the lost, but for the moment he'd just as soon not think of that. Instead, he had made up his mind to go back to his fishing trade; worse than that, he was dissuading others from a life of serving the Lord. As Dr. Wuest suggests in his own word studies, the entire future of Christianity hung on a fine thread.

Although he was personable, like the hero in a Greek drama, Peter had a tragic flaw. He was impetuous and prone to act on impulse! Thus he made an easy target for Satan (Luke 22:31). Possibly, Peter conjured up before the others a picture of the "good old days." At any rate, they all decided to throw in their lot with his. It seemed as though Satan had won the day! That was when the risen Savior took matters into His own hands. He made the fishing waters "off limits" to the fish, and the experienced fishermen came ashore with empty nets. They found the Lord waiting for them at the dark of dawn (verses 3b-5). It was only when they obeyed His specific instructions that they were successful at their trade (v. 6).

While it is not our purpose to exegete this chapter in detail, note this expression of the grace and love of Jesus Christ. He could have rebuked them soundly for deserting their post. He could have commanded them to grovel before Him in repentance. He could have ordered them back on the road to preaching His cross. He did none of these things. Instead, He had a cheery fire burning on the shore and a meal of grilled fish and hot bread awaiting them. A gracious host, He saw beyond their failure and met their need of warmth, food, encouragement (verses 9-13).

**PHILEO? AGAPAO?** It was not until after breakfast that the Lord singled out the instigator of this break-away group. If Peter could be put back onto the right road, the others would follow. In the conversation that ensued, the key is the verb "to love." (Read verses 15-17.) **The first two times the Lord used the word AGAPAO** in his questioning of Peter (verses 15, 16). This term and its other forms occur about **three hundred and twenty times** in the New Testament; **PHILEO**, only **forty-five times**. Were these words identical in their meaning John would not have pointed out that Peter answered three times, "Yes, Lord; You know that I PHILEO You!"

Let me remind you of the fact that the Lord and Peter conversed in their native language--Aramaic. John translated their conversation into Koine (common) Greek, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes no mistakes; He uses AGAPAO to express LOVE IN ITS DEEPEST SENSE, LOVE OF THE NOBLEST QUALITY THAT SETS THE HIGHEST VALUE ON THE OBJECT LOVED. **AGAPAO IS A LOVE OF TOTAL DEVOTION, WHILE PHILEO IS A LOVE OF EMOTION. AGAPAO HAS DEEP ROOTS IN THE SOUL AND SPIRIT; PHILEO IS FED BY EMOTION.**

The Lord's question, "...lovest thou me more **than these**" (v. 15) has often been interpreted to refer to the men with Peter. However, keep in mind why Peter had defected from serving the Lord. It was not a matter of choosing between Christ and his closest associates; it was a case of choosing between the great commission and a profitable occupation. **APPLICATION:** WHAT WE DO WITH OUR LIFE IS VERY MUCH THE LORD'S BUSINESS! We are to glorify God in our bodies, which belong to God (I Cor. 6:19, 20)! The question would therefore concern the fish; did Peter like fishing for fish more than fishing for men? Did he set a higher value on Jesus Christ and His perfect design, or did he esteem fishing THE THING TO DO? What were Peter's priorities? Well, that became obvious from the very first.

Peter's answer each time was, "You know I love You!" He was telling the Lord how very fond he was of Him, and I am sure that his emotion showed in his words and in his face. But the Lord was not after Peter's emotional outbursts. Peter had assured the Lord before that he of all disciples would NEVER forsake Him. He intended well, like so many of us, but he did not come through on his promise. EMOTION HAS ITS PLACE, BUT IT DOES NOT CARRY US INDEFINITELY! What the Lord wanted was Peter's DEVOTION! Were Peter completely devoted to Christ, he would have remained faithful, no matter what might happen. He would have gladly laid down his life for his Friend, but Peter was not quite prepared to go THAT far. That would be asking too much! I think that was why Peter used the Aramaic equivalent of PHILEO. At least, we must credit him with honesty! Like many of us, Peter was prepared to love the Lord up to a point!

The second question of our Lord received the same answer: "Simon, do you AGAPAO Me?" "Yes, Lord, I PHILEO You!" (v. 16). Finally the Lord used Peter's vocabulary, "Simon, do you PHILEO Me?" This time Peter was clearly upset. Wasn't the Lord omniscient? He said, almost impatiently, "Of course, You know that I PHILEO You!"

Peter's problem was that he loved the comforts of life, the material things life had to offer. Yet the child of God is told not to set his affection on things on this earth (Col. 3:2)! He is to be preoccupied with spiritual values, with serving the Lord. Should the Lord reward him with material blessings, he is free to enjoy these, but never to the exclusion of the Giver of all good and perfect gifts! **Application:** We should heed the warning of I John 2:15!

Each of the interrogations ended with a reminder of Peter's mission in life: "Be feeding My lambs and sheep." The great fisherman was to become a great teacher. In His omniscience the Lord knew Peter's potential. He knew that Peter would become a stable, mature believer whose devotion to the Savior would lead to his martyrdom. Therefore, the Lord did not pursue the conversation but changed it abruptly by prophesying what type of death Peter would die (v. 18, 19). PHILEO WOULD CHANGE AND GROW INTO AGAPAO; AND AGAPAO WOULD TRANSFORM VACILLATING WEAKNESS INTO TOWERING STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION! Compelled by that LOVE he would serve the Lord as long as he lived. What's more, he would encourage others not to fail the test of love as he once had.

Peter wrote in his first Epistle that he was confident that the believers caught up in the waves of persecution during the early years of the Church Age would triumph in the trial of their faith. He spoke of their love for Jesus Christ--their AGAPAO for the Savior they had not seen (I Pet. 1:8), which invariably results in "joy unspeakable and full of glory." In his second Epistle he mentioned the nearness of his own death and the work he had yet to perform in stabilizing the saints (2 Pet. 1:12-14). Lesson: pastors, teachers come and go; the message remains. NO HUMAN BEING IS INDISPENSABLE!

Did Peter remember that encounter, when he referred to his own death? I am sure he did, even as I am sure that he understood that LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY CORRECT MOTIVATION FOR SERVING HIM! GOD'S LOVE MUST FIND REPERCUSSION IN OUR HEARTS!

## II. REPERCUSSION OF LOVE

**A. The love of God.** John wrote, " In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (I John 4:9). Yet, God's love was not limited to those who accepted the work of Christ on the cross; God commended (proved) "his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). He so loved the world that He gave His Son! Thus the love of God extends to both, believers and unbelievers alike. However, God's love for the believer goes beyond concern for his immortal soul. "Accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6), we enter into the sphere of His love as we enter into God's family. As His children, we can never be separated from the love of God (Rom. 8:35-39). That same love God has for His own disciplines His children when-ever necessary (Heb. 12:6). God sees our potential as He saw Peter's potential. Where would we stand if our Lord addressed Peter's question to us? Are we prepared to make a total commitment, or would we rather "GO A FISHING?"

**B. The love of the believer.** AGAPAO love is a response from our innermost being toward the One Whom we value above all else. John had this in mind when he wrote, "We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). The basic test to our love for God is to put our love for other believers to the test. Does it meet God's standards? Do we measure up to the requirements of I John 3:16? That is, would we go the last mile, even if it endangered our own safety? Do we follow God's example as specified in I John 4:11? John asks, "How can we love God Whom we have not seen, if we cannot love a fellow-believer whom we have seen?" Are we so self-centered that we cannot be concerned with others? Are we so wrapped up in our little world that we are indifferent to the needs of other believers? IF WE LOVE AS GOD LOVES, WE WILL SET A HIGH VALUE ON ALL THAT CONCERNS ANOTHER BELIEVER IN CHRIST!

Yet, the love of the believer should extend beyond the "inner circle" of the members of God's family. Love for the Lord should motivate us to become fishers of men ourselves. Paul put it this way, "For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14).

We speak unhesitatingly about those whom we love. We just "happen to have a picture" on us, and we are only too ready to show it. Are we as eager to describe Him Who is LOVE? Do we share the plan of salvation with those with whom we rub elbows daily? Does the love of Christ overflow from our lives into lives which are destitute of the love of Christ? Let this be our prayer, that WE MAY LEARN TO WALK IN LOVE AS CHRIST ALSO HAS LOVED US (Eph. 5:2)!

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

### Lesson 9

John was a very tender and compassionate man. Deeply aware of the Lord's love for His own, he refers to himself in his writings, not by name, but by this description, "that disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:7; cf., 13:23). He reiterates the Lord's commandments concerning the test and proof of the believer's love in his epistles. He cites the immensity of divine love!

**READ I JOHN!** Working on a separate sheet of paper, **list each mention of love**, along with **its reference**. **Group similar** (or identical) **statements**. **Categorize under appropriate headings in columns**. **Transfer neatly to this page**. (Clue: Watch for "WHAT TO LOVE"; "WHAT NOT TO LOVE"; "HOW TO LOVE"; "HOW NOT TO LOVE"; "HOW GOD LOVES", etc. Repetitions should be listed by reference, not by wording. If desired, you may check your findings against a listing of the word "love" (AGAPAO, AGAPE) in a concordance.)

**LOOK UP THE FOLLOWING VERSES!** PHILEO may be used in a good or bad sense.  
**Circle those references which convey the good concept.**

Matthew 6:5

John 5:20

I Corinthians 16:22

Matthew 23:6

John 11:36

Titus 3:15

Luke 20:46

John 15:19

Revelation 3:19