

~ To Know God's Word ~

Have you ever found yourself reading several verses of the Bible and then questioning yourself what was being stated or how did this apply to you? I am sure we all have asked the same question. God's holy, inspired word (2 Timothy 3: 16, 17) is provided for mankind to know God's true character and His plan for the world of mankind. Mankind has a desire to know of his Creator, and by studying and meditating upon the Scriptures, we can have many of our questions answered. Yet, without having a few simple keys to unlock the mysteries (Colossians 1: 26), the Bible appears to be a book of unrelated stories or curious events not having any overall purpose.

The Old Testament was written by men being guided by God's power concerning events prior to the birth of Jesus. In like manner, inspired men concerning events afterwards wrote the New Testament. These testaments were written in Hebrew and Greek respectively, without sentence construction as we have it now, i.e., without paragraph, sentence, or punctuation. Translators have striven to convert the original text into a language for

us to be able to read. For the most part, they were successful. Yet, there are a few interpretation errors due to their understanding of various church doctrines. Furthermore, the choice of a particular English word for the translation may result in a different meaning than the original writer had intended. With the addition of sentence construction, the addition or placement of a comma may totally change the thought. Thus, to study and receive an understanding of the scriptures, one must be aware of these potential problems and utilize study aids.

The primary study aid is provided by God to those who seek to know His word with an open and humble heart and mind. (James 4: 8-10) There are many books written today to aid in our studies also. Two excellent types of guides are a concordance, such as *Strong's Exhaustive* or *Young's Analytical Concordance* and a good Bible dictionary, such as *Vine's* or *Smith's*. All the books of the Bible were written to reveal and support God's word from Genesis to Revelation. With the use of several methods of studying,

anyone will be helped in harmonizing the scriptures throughout the Bible.

Let us consider a topical study method. As an example, to understand God's love for the world of mankind, a topical study of *love* needs to be done, which would include looking up all the words associated with *love* in the concordance. The same topical study method would be done on the promises, covenants, laws, etc.

First consider the meaning of the word *love* in John 21: 15-17 (KJV); "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (*agapao*) thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love (*phileo*) thee. He saith unto him, feed my lambs. {16} He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (*agapao*) thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love (*phileo*) thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. {17} He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (*phileo*) thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest (*phileo*) thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love (*phileo*) thee.

Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

The original Greek work for love was inserted within the verses above. The *Strong's* definition for *agapao* is to love in a social or moral sense (of the head). *Phileo* is a love for a friend or to have affection for someone (of the heart).

Why did Jesus used the word *agapao* in his question to Peter the first two times and *phileo* the last time? Why did Peter answer *phileo* all three times? *Phileo* carries the thought of action based on emotional or heart feelings for family or friends. The love Jesus expressed, which is the same as God's, included a *phileo* love, but it was a higher type of love based on a true moral sense. *Agapao* is a love without a feeling of obligation. Jesus asked Peter to preach to the sheep (Israel) without requiring him to first love them.

Consider John 3: 16 (KJV), "For God so loved (*agapao*) the world, that He gave His only begotten son." Mankind, having fallen into sin (Romans 5: 12, 19) was disobedient and failed to love to do His will. The best that man could achieve was a *phileo* love for God. Yet, Christ's love was

such as that it was fully obedient.
(Romans 13: 10)

Additional usage of the word *agapao* is shown in the word *love* used in Matthew 5: 43-46. Also mankind's love (*phileo*) was shown by the scribes in Luke 20: 46.

Finally consider love in Romans 12: 9, 10 (KJV), "Let love (*agape*, from the word *agapao*) be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. {10} Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love (*philadelphia*, fraternal or brotherly affection).

By reviewing the Greek word with its definition, a deeper and clearer understanding of the word *love* can be seen. To truly love God, we need to develop a higher level of love, an *agape* love.

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