



## Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

# Short Study 078: Peter's Love Challenge

Study Author: Michael Button

**Read:** John 21:1-23

**Introduction:** The Gospel writer John records a resurrection appearance of Jesus to seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberius (otherwise known as the Sea of Galilee). One of the seven was Simon Peter. After breakfast, Jesus took Peter aside and three times in succession challenged him regarding his love.

Two different Greek words are used in this passage. To get the most out of this study, it will be helpful to know the meanings of two different verbs that are both translated in English as 'love'<sup>1</sup>:

*agapaō* – a noble, self-giving love (usually used to speak of God's love to man).

*phileō* – intimate affection.

Which would you consider to be the 'stronger'?

**1. Prior to the questioning.** Read verses 4-7. Why would Peter put on his tunic when he was about to go swimming?

**2. The questioning.** Read verses 15-17 and note the different words used by Jesus and Peter:

<i>Question to Peter</i>	<i>Peter's Response</i>
"Do you love me more than these?" (Gk <i>agapaō</i> )	"Yes Lord, you know that I love you" (Gk <i>phileō</i> )
"Do you love me?" (Gk <i>agapaō</i> )	"Yes Lord, you know that I love you" (Gk <i>phileō</i> )
"Do you love me?" (Gk <i>phileō</i> )	"Lord ... you know that I love you" (Gk <i>phileō</i> )

Consider or search for the answers to the following questions:

- (i) Why did Jesus challenge Peter three times in succession?
- (ii) What were the "these" to which Jesus referred after His first question?
- (iii) What change did Jesus make in His third question, and why?
- (iv) With what responsibilities did Jesus charge Peter after each question, and what did He mean?

**3. After the questioning.** Read verses 18-19. Jesus prophesied of Peter's future. What did He mean? See what you can find out about what Peter's future life and death.

**To think about:** How would I answer those questions if they were put to me?

**To dig deeper:** With the aid of a concordance and/or Bible Dictionary, explore the use of the Greek words for love, looking for some examples where they are used.

<sup>1</sup> Bearing in mind that the Greek words were probably themselves translations from the Aramaic that Jesus is likely to have used).