

Did Jesus Have Favorites?

John 20:2 KJV

Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved (5368), and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

John 11:33-36

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,³⁴ And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.³⁵ Jesus wept.³⁶ Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved (5368) him! KJV

NT:5368

1. phileo (fil-eh'-o); from NT:5384; to be a friend to (fond of [an individual or an object]), i.e. have affection for (denoting personal attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling; while NT:25 is wider, embracing especially the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety: the two thus stand related very much as NT:2309 and NT:1014, or as NT:2372 and NT:3563 respectively; the former being chiefly of the heart and the latter of the head); specifically, to kiss (as a mark of tenderness):KJV - kiss, love.

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LOVE (NOUN AND VERB)

2. phileo NT:5368 is to be distinguished from agapao in this, that phileo more nearly represents "tender affection." The two words are used for the "love" of the Father for the Son, John 3:35 (No. 1), and 5:20 (No. 2); for the believer, 14:21 (No. 1) and 16:27 (No. 2); both, of Christ's "love" for a certain disciple, 13:23 (No. 1), and 20:2 (No. 2). Yet the distinction between the two verbs remains, and they are never used indiscriminately in the same passage; if each is used with reference to the same objects, as just mentioned, each word retains its distinctive and essential character.

Phileo is never used in a command to men to "love" God; it is, however, used as a warning in 1 Cor 16:22; agapao is used instead, e. g., Matt 22:37; Luke 10:27; Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 8:3; 1 Peter 1:8; 1 John 4:21. The distinction between the two verbs finds a conspicuous instance in the narrative of John 21:15-17. The context itself indicates that agapao in the first two questions suggests the "love" that values and esteems (cf. Rev 12:11). It is an unselfish "love," ready to serve. The use of phileo in Peter's answers and the Lord's third question, conveys the thought of cherishing the Object above all else, of manifesting an affection characterized by constancy, from the motive of the highest veneration. See also Trench, Syn., Sec. xii.

Again, to "love" (phileo) life, from an undue desire to preserve it, forgetful of the real object of living, meets with the Lord's reproof, John 12:25. On the contrary, to "love" life (agapao) as used in 1 Peter 3:10, is to consult the true interests of living. Here the word phileo would be quite inappropriate.

(from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

John 11:5

5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. (from New International Version)

John 13:23

23 One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. (from New International Version)

John 20:2

2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"
(from New International Version)

John 21:7

7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. (from New International Version)

John 21:20

20 Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") (from New International Version)