

## Read John 21:15-19

1. Note the vocabulary for the Greek words for "love" and re-read the passage as follows, and discuss your thoughts.

*John 21:15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you **agapo** me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I **phileo** you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."  
<sup>16</sup> A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you **agapo** me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I **phileo** you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."  
<sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you **phileo** me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you **phileo** me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I **phileo** you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.*

2. There is some question about the comparative adverbial phrase: "more than these." Does it mean a. do you love me more than these other men love me? or b. do you love me more than you love these other men? Thoughts?

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:** Written in the 90s CE, the writer of John is looking back to around 63 CE where Peter is in Rome, and is swept up in Nero's persecution of Christians following the burning of Rome. Peter requests crucifixion upside down, stating he is unworthy to be crucified like Jesus.

## Read John 21:20-25

1. Discuss your thoughts concerning the rumor, and the attempt to dispel it.
2. Any other thoughts on John's gospel?

☞The End☞



a study of  
The Gospel According to John  
Summer/Fall/Winter/Spring 2025-2026

Lesson 25

John 21  
"A Love Story"  
—or—  
"The End"

## REVIEW:

From John 20, what were some things that caught your attention concerning Jesus' interactions with all the disciples after his resurrection?

## VOCABULARY:

**Naked:** γυμνός (gymnos) Naked, bare, or exposed. Referring to Peter's attire while fishing.

**Love:** ἀγαπᾷς (agapas) vv. 15 & 16 – Far beyond sentiment, ἀγαπάω describes a volitional, covenant-loyal love that seeks the true good of another regardless of merit or cost.

**Love:** φιλέω (phileó) vv. 16 & 17 – "affectionate friendship" – properly, to show warm affection in intimate friendship, characterized by tender, heartfelt consideration and kinship.

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT? *Interesting (useful?) trivia –*

\*SECTION ONE: First-century fishing in Palestine, particularly on the Sea of Galilee, was a commercialized, heavily taxed industry controlled by elite elites, with fishers often working at subsistence levels or as contractors. Operations utilized boats and night-fishing with nets (casting/dragnets). Key centers included Bethsaida and Magdala, with fish (e.g., tilapia) exported to Rome.

Fishermen commonly worked at night, using linen casting nets for shallow areas or large, two-boat dragnet systems to maximize catches. Families often worked together but hired laborers, as noted with Zebedee's crew. Fishing was a state-run, regulated industry. Fishers needed to purchase licenses, and taxes could consume 25-40% of the catch. While some fishermen were independent, many were impoverished by fees and taxes to Roman or Herodian authorities.

The Sea of Galilee was the hub of the industry with Bethsaida and Magdala as major center for fishers like Peter and Andrew.

In modern, small-boat fishing, you can cast a net from either the port (left) or starboard (right) side, but there are practical and historical reasons for choosing one over the other.

- Port Side (Left): Traditionally preferred for fishing, especially when docking, to keep the fishing net away from the steering apparatus.
- Starboard Side (Right): Historically avoided because early boats had a steering oar (or "starboard") on this side, which nets could snag.

## Read John 21:1-6

1. Discuss what you notice in these verses, and in light of the cultural context.
2. What's the most common greeting between fishermen?

## Read John 21:7-14

1. What do you notice about the reaction of Peter and the other disciples?
2. Discuss the significance of the number **153**, being the triangular number of **17**, in light of the following Old Testament prophecy, gematria, numerology, mathematics, and geometry.
  - a. Prophecy: **Read Ezekiel 47:10** The story reflects a prophecy where rivers of living water are flowing out of the temple in Jerusalem to the southeast area of the Dead Sea (En Gedi). The river becomes a large body of water where the salt water fishermen catch many fish, suggesting that the "river of life" and the Messianic age are now present. The passage describes the Dead Sea becoming fresh and filled with fish and great quantities brought in by fishermen.
  - b. **Gematria in Ezekiel 47:10:**
    - Eneglaim** (עִגְלַיִם): The Hebrew letters for "Eglaim" have a combined numerical value of **153**, representing the extent of the fishing territory.
    - Gedi** (גֵּדִי): The Hebrew letters for "Gedi" (En Gedi) total **17**, which is significant because 153 is the sum of integers from 1 to 17 and is called the "*Triangular Number of 17.*"
  - c. **Hebrew Gematria:**
    1. **17** equals the sum of the Hebrew letters for "sons of God" *Benei Elohim* בְּנֵי־אֱלֹהִים, and "I am God" *Ani Elohim* אֲנִי־אֱלֹהִים.
    2. **17** equals 10+7. Ten corresponds to completeness, holiness, and ten commandments. Seven corresponds to seven-day creation cycle, Sabbath, and the "fullness, completeness or perfection" of God's work.
    3. **17** represents goodness in Hebrew Gematria.
  - d. **Symbolic Numerology:** The word "Gedi" is also found to be the 153rd word in the broader section of Ezekiel 47.
  - e. **Mathematics: Arithmetic Narcissism:** 153 is a "narcissistic number," meaning the sum of its own digits each raised to the power of the number of its digits equals the number itself  $153=1^3+5^3+3^3$