

# BIBLE 101 — Week 15

## Avoiding the Traps That Twist Scripture's Meaning

*Scripture Focus: Romans 1:16 · John 3:19 · 2 Samuel 13:15 (LXX)*

### KEY VOCABULARY — scan this before you watch

Term	What It Means
<b>Etymological Fallacy</b>	The mistake of thinking a word's true meaning is found in its ancient _____ or root parts — not how it's actually used
<b>Semantic Range</b>	The whole spectrum of possible _____ a word can have — like a cloud of potential uses
<b>Illegitimate Totality Transfer</b>	The mistake of cramming _____ possible meanings of a word into one single use of that word
<b>Context</b>	The great _____ — the surrounding words and sentences that determine which meaning from the semantic range is the right one

## I. THE PROBLEM: "THE GREEK WORD REALLY MEANS ..."

We've all heard it: the speaker leans in and says, "But the Greek word here \_\_\_\_\_ means ..." and we're hooked.

It feels like a secret insight, a hidden truth lost in \_\_\_\_\_.

But the ease of looking up Greek and Hebrew words can create a \_\_\_\_\_ — we get so focused on a word's "secret meaning" that we miss the plain, simple meaning the author intended.

## II. THREE COMMON FALLACIES

### Fallacy 1 — The Etymological Fallacy

- The mistake: A word's true meaning is found in its ancient \_\_\_\_\_ or component parts
- But language doesn't work that way — it's \_\_\_\_\_, not origin, that determines meaning
- **Example:** "Butterfly" has nothing to do with \_\_\_\_\_ or flies

#### Classic biblical example:

- Popular claim: The Greek word dynamis means "\_\_\_\_\_ power"
- Problem: Dynamite wasn't invented until \_\_\_\_\_. The biblical writers had no concept of it.
- Actual meaning: Dynamis simply meant \_\_\_\_\_ or ability

### Fallacy 2 — Ignoring the Semantic Range

- Almost every word has a whole spectrum of possible \_\_\_\_\_
- A word doesn't mean all of those things at the \_\_\_\_\_ time

#### Example — the word "run":

- To jog, to \_\_\_\_\_ a company, a river runs, a machine runs, to run for office
- In "He runs the company" — which meaning? You know instantly it doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_ laps around the boardroom

- **What's doing the work?** \_\_\_\_\_ — the great selector

**Fallacy 3 — Illegitimate Totality Transfer**

- The mistake: Taking the whole \_\_\_\_\_ of meanings and cramming all of them into one single use
- Like saying "He runs the company" means he's jogging AND managing AND \_\_\_\_\_ like a river all at once

**III. THE AGAPE MYTH: A CASE STUDY**

The popular teaching:

WORD	POPULAR DEFINITION	THE CLAIM
Agape	Divine, _____, the highest form of love	The "God kind" of love
Phileo	Regular human _____ love	Just ordinary affection

**But does the Bible actually support this rigid separation?**

**Evidence against the chart:**

- In the Greek OT (the version the apostles read), **agape** describes Amnon's disgusting, sinful \_\_\_\_\_ for his sister (2 Samuel 13:15 LXX)
- John 3:19 says people **agapēd** the \_\_\_\_\_ — they loved evil

**The lesson:** Agape isn't a magic code word that always means one specific thing. Like any word, its meaning is shaped by \_\_\_\_\_.

**II PAUSE & REFLECT**

Have you ever heard the agape vs. phileo distinction taught as absolute truth? How does seeing the actual biblical evidence change your understanding?

\_\_\_\_\_

**IV. A BETTER METHOD: CONTEXT FIRST AND LAST**

STEP	WHAT TO DO	WHY IT MATTERS
1	Read the whole _____ — get the main point	Context first
2	Consult a good dictionary or _____	See the semantic range — possible meanings

3	Ask: Which meaning actually fits the _____ I'm reading?	Let context select the meaning
4	Let the _____ have the last say	The passage is the authority, not the lexicon

Notice: Context is both Step 1 and the final \_\_\_\_\_. You start there and you end there.

### V. RED FLAGS: YOUR FALLACY ALARM CHECKLIST

Watch out when someone:

- Says "the Greek word \_\_\_\_\_ means ..." and introduces a meaning disconnected from the passage
- Starts talking about a word's ancient \_\_\_\_\_ as if that settles its current meaning
- Loads every possible meaning into a \_\_\_\_\_ word

**The test:** A good interpretation will make sense based on the passage's main \_\_\_\_\_ — not on some secret word meaning.

**The ultimate question:**

Are we using these tools to understand what the author was actually trying to \_\_\_\_\_?

Or are we using the text as a prop for our own ideas, making the author say what \_\_\_\_\_ want to hear?

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Think of a time you heard someone say 'the Greek word really means ...' in a sermon or study. Based on what you've learned, how would you evaluate that claim now?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why is context — not etymology or a lexicon — the ultimate authority for determining a word's meaning? How does this change your approach to word studies?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Pick a word from a passage you're reading this week. Look up its semantic range, then ask: Which meaning fits this specific context? How does that process differ from what you've done before?

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