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BY DR. JOHN BECHTLE | JANUARY 23, 2021

Ginosko – Knowledge that Goes Beyond Information

Greek Word of the Week (https://ezraproject.com/category/greek-word-of-the-week/)



Word of the Week

January 24, 2021

Doing Your Own Word Studies

You can study the Bible without knowing Greek. That's how most Christians do it. Even a great Christian scholar like Saint Augustine disliked Greek, and worked in Latin when he was writing theology. But Greek offers advantages. It's like switching from black and white TV to high definition color screens. You can see what's happening either way, but it's more satisfying to watch the upgraded medium.

You can learn to use proven techniques to study Greek words for yourself. Just go to the Ezra Project Web site and take a look at the new **Word Study Course** (<https://ezraproject.com/word-study-course/>) that will be available in its completed form by the end of January.

Ginoṣko – Knowledge that Goes Beyond Information

We live in the Big Information Age. A 10-year-old with a smart phone has access to more data than you can find in the Library of Congress. One source estimates that Google, Amazon, Facebook and Microsoft collectively store enough bytes to play 2.2 billion years of music.

We know so much, but I wonder how much we really know.

Social media gives the illusion of intimacy. You can be “friends” with thousands of people, sharing the details of what you ate for breakfast but having no actual contact with them.

We know so many, but I wonder how many people we really know.

Long before the Internet existed, the Bible dealt with a similar predicament: knowing God without really knowing God.

No question is more important, and we can throw light on the answer by considering the Greek words for “knowing.”

The New Testament employs two Greek verbs for “know” most of the time.

- *Oida* (about 318 times)

- *Ginōskō* (about 225 times)

Both words are translated as “know,” covering a broad range of possible ideas. With blockbuster words like these, a full investigation would flow into multiple chapters, so we will track one important line of thought.

The two words overlap quite a bit, and they often seem to be used interchangeably. But there are some differences in flavor.

Consider two kinds of knowledge:

1. Knowledge of facts

You know that $2+2=4$. This is a raw fact. It’s easy to learn, and once you master it, you know all there is to know about it.

2. Knowledge of people

You know a friend in a different way. You know facts about them, of course, but that’s not all. You know a person because you have spent time talking and doing things together, building a relationship. It is knowledge gained by experience.

This kind of knowledge takes time and it is never complete. Even people celebrating their 50th anniversary can still discover surprises about their spouse!

The Greek word *oida* can describe either kind of knowledge, but it leans a little toward the knowledge of facts. It is related to the word for “see,” and it often describes the kind of knowledge that results from observation. You have seen the

reality and know it to be true. In some cases, you know the truth because God has revealed it.

The word *ginōskō*, on the other hand, often describes the kind of knowledge involved in building an intimate relationship with a person.

- In fact, *ginōskō* is tied so tightly to relationships that it is used to describe the sexual relations between a husband and wife (**Matthew 1:25** (<https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt%201.25>); **Luke 1:34** (<https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Luke%201.34>)).
- At the day of judgment, Jesus declared, many would claim to be His followers, but He would say “I never knew you” (**Matthew 7:23** (<https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt%207.23>)). Of course, He knew the facts about them, but He had no personal relationship with them.

The apostle John loves to use *ginōskō* to describe this deeper, person-to-person knowledge that characterizes God. Jesus chose *ginōskō* to describe the intimacy between the Father and the Son, as well as the connection between Himself and His sheep.

I am the good shepherd: and I **know** My own, and My own **know** Me, even as the Father **knows** Me and I **know** the Father (**John 10:14-15** (<https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%2010.14-15>)).

More than mere acquisition of facts, this knowledge leads to love (**1 John 4:7-8** (<https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20John%204.7-8>)) and obedience (**John 10:27** (<https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%2010.27>)).

Knowledge about God is important. We need to raise the level of biblical literacy in our day. But actually knowing God in a personal relationship is even more vital. How well do you know God?