

How It Works

Getting the Big Picture – the “Range” Tour

Most persons who use the *Contexticon* for non-academic purposes will want to concentrate on the first of two “tours” offered for every term: **Range of Usage**. The beauty of Range is that it affords a quick and practical overview of the ways a biblical term was typically used by native Greek speakers in the biblical period.

➔ **In the sample to the right:** note how Range identifies four main ways ancient authors used the term KOINONIA – often rendered “fellowship” in biblical translations.

Range screens illustrate a key fact about biblical Greek language: native speakers typically used the same term in different verbal contexts with distinctly different designations. The *Contexticon* helps you to quickly get a handle on the possibilities so that – as we will see in the slides ahead – you can better assess KOINONIA (or its English translation) each time it appears in the New Testament.

RANGE OF USAGE “TOUR” The case of KOINONIA*

Designating:

1. The sharing of resources
2. Participation with others in a common activity, cause, or characteristic
3. A closeness of association
4. A community with shared ideals

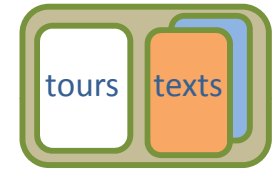
*presentations include all cognate forms



To enhance your understanding, please take some time to review the 7 slides that follow – it’s time well spent!

To advance slides, use the forward arrow on your keyboard.

Diverse Contexts of Term Use – Organized!



The Range screen sorts for you – by category – the citations for all occurrences of your term in the New Testament. This sorting of New Testament citations is a **great help for persons gathering readings on a topic** or for individuals interpreting specific passages. It quickly orients you to the way biblical audiences likely understood your term in each specific context.

To the right, we cite just one NT verse for each Range category (normally there are many). Here you can see how the same term – KOINONIA – had different designations in different biblical contexts. Interestingly, all four citations listed here come from the same writer: Paul.

RANGE for KOINONIA

Designating:

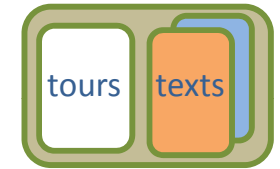
1. The sharing of resources
Rom 15:26
2. Participation with others in a common activity, cause, or characteristic
2Cor 8:23
3. A closeness of association
2Cor 6:14
4. A community with shared ideals
Gal 2:9

“For [the churches of] Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their **resources [KOINONIA]** with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.”

“As for Titus, he is my **partner [KOINONOS]** and co-worker in your service”

“ . . . what **association [KOINONIA]** is there between light and darkness?”

“ . . . when James and Peter and John, who were pillars [of the church community in Jerusalem], recognized the grace that had been given to us, they gave Barnabas and me the right hand of **church fellowship [KOINONIA]**.”



The Confidence Inspired by *Contexticon* Tours

Scholars who prepare Range screens for the *Contexticon* do not begin by examining how biblical authors employ a term like KOINONIA. Rather, they examine a great many occurrences in ancient writings *outside* the New Testament.

Inevitably during this process, they will recognize patterns in particular contexts of term usage. Citations that exhibit the same pattern are gathered into a defined group. Many such groups come into focus. These groupings – reflecting the distinctly different applications of the same Greek term – are the basis of defining categories in Range.

On Range, you will see the “pattern-defining” citations listed in blue beneath citations from the NT. One is shown to the right, demonstrating that KOINONIA was used for the “sharing of resources” (category 1). The quote here is from the ancient historian, Diodorus of Sicily.

RANGE for KOINONIA

Designating:

1. The sharing of resources

Rom 15:26

Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History*, 8.7.1

2. Participation with others in a common activity, cause, or characteristic

2Cor 8:23

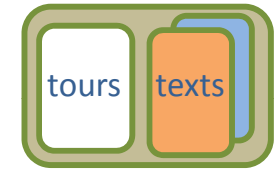
3. A closeness of association

2Cor 6:14

4. A community with shared ideals

Gal 2:9

“Polychares, a Messenian of great wealth and conspicuous ancestry, agreed with Euaephus, a Spartan, to **share together [KOINONIA]** the border land.”



Harnessing the “Context Principle”

The fact that uses of the same Greek word can be separated into distinct categories reflects another fundamental – and powerfully useful – principle:

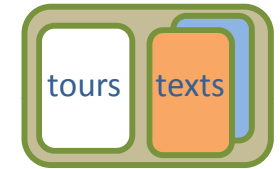
A word used in a biblical passage does not convey meaning in and of itself; rather, its role must be understood from the context in which it appears.

We’re all familiar with the kinds of contextual factors involved: the flow of the story being told, the way the sentence is constructed, the surrounding words and their popular associations, the historical moment when something is said, and so on.

➔ **In the sample to the right:** note how KOINONIA is something given to “the poor” from persons in one region to another – a contextual clue indicating that KOINONIA involved a financial gift. Hence, its location under the category that reads: “the sharing of resources.”

KOINONIA in Rom 15:26:

“For Macedonia and Achaia
[Christians there] were pleased
to make a KOINONIA to the poor
among the Christians at
Jerusalem.” [literal wording]



Commitment to Interpretive Openness

A special feature of Range lies in its use of asterisks after New Testament citations. The asterisk tells you that the citation has been placed in more than one category on the Range screen. That means one of two things:

(a) The term could signify one or the other of the options indicated – it's open to your interpretation;

(b) The term could have had *multiple associations* for audiences in the biblical period – coming across on multiple levels like a pun or *double entendre*, often carrying rhetorical force or humor for early audiences.

➡ **The example shown to the right** involves a comment from Paul about the KOINONIA of his fellow church members at Philippi. Here the usage falls either in category 2 or category 3, or very possibly in *both*.

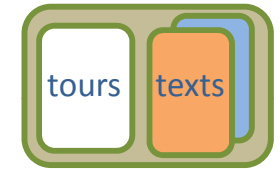
RANGE for KOINONIA

Designating:

1. The sharing of resources
2. Participation with others in a common activity, cause, or characteristic
Phil 1:5*
3. A closeness of association
Phil 1:5*
4. A community with shared ideals

Phil. 1:5: Paul to his church at Philippi:

"I thank my God every time I remember you . . . because of your **sharing [KOINONIA]** in the gospel from the first day until now." (NRSV)



Expanding Horizons, Responsible Limits

The asterisks in Range keep the possibilities of interpretation open. Scholars developing Range screens are careful to place New Testament citations in all categories where there is real possibility – thus making every effort to respect the right of Bible readers to make their own interpretations. Respecting this right is a basic tenet of the *Contexticon*.

➡ **Note the full range of possibility for Acts 2:42 on the right!** It's asterisked in all categories. Again, this indicates that one category may apply, or another, or *all* in one remarkable *quadruple entendre* for early audiences! (The last option would not be impossible, given themes found in the book of Acts.)

Equally important, however: Even as Range opens possibilities, it also sets responsible limits. If a hypothesis for interpretation falls outside the possibilities identified on Range, that interpretation is very unlikely – certainly for early audiences of the New Testament writings. “Range” thus sets boundaries for the modern imagination. But in doing so, it promotes interpretation practices that are honest and responsible.

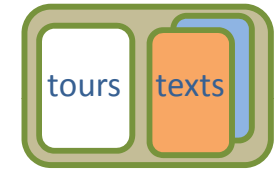
RANGE for KOINONIA

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Acts 2:42*
2. Participation with others in a common activity, cause, or characteristic
Acts 2:42*
3. A closeness of association
Acts 2:42*
4. A community with shared ideals
Acts 2:42*

Acts 2:42: Of the multitude who responded to Peter's call for baptism at Pentecost:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and **fellowship [KOINONIA]**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (NRSV)



Enriched Reading of Modern Translations

In addition to providing the Greek New Testament, *Version 1.0* of the *Contexticon* includes two English translations – the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and the King James Version (KJV). Plans are underway to add other reputable translations, including the New International Version (NIV).

Translations must employ modern terms to render the terms used by ancient authors. And in a great many instances, the modern “translation equivalents” do give a close or adequate representation of the Greek of the New Testament. It is often not possible, however, to convey through a single modern term the full associations a Greek term had for Greek-speakers in the early churches. In these cases, the *Contexticon* enables modern readers to become more aware of these associations, so drawing closer to the Greek text even while enjoying a long-read, familiar translation!

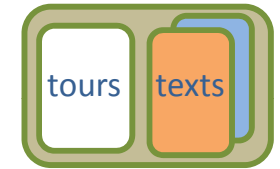
➔ **The example to the right** shows two distinct renderings of KOINONIA in 1Cor 10:16. The KJV translators chose “communion.” The NRSV translators brought out the “sharing” aspect. But readers of *either translation* can enjoy the text more fully by noting the possible multivalent richness indicated on Range in the *Contexticon*. There, 1Cor 10:16 is listed in three categories: sharing resources, joint participation, and closeness of association. *Any or all* may have been possible for Paul’s audience at Corinth!

1Cor 10:16 – KJV

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the **communion [KOINONIA]** of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the **communion [KOINONIA]** of the body of Christ?”

1Cor 10:16 – NRSV

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a **sharing [KOINONIA]** in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a **sharing [KOINONIA]** in the body of Christ?”



Other Features as You Chart your Path

The *Contexticon* includes more features and functions than those described in this Guide. We have focused here on the tour called “Range of Usage ” since it’s so centrally important for most readers. As you explore the *Contexticon*, however, you may wish to look out for the more detailed *narrative tour*, called “Broad Context.” This and other features are described in the FAQs, accessible at any time from the navigation bar at the bottom of your screen.

Now that you’re familiar with the concept and navigation controls, why not take a trial run in the *Contexticon* itself!

To help you start, this guide offers three possible pathways to follow. Simply close this PDF and click on the “Test Drive” PDF to launch your journey.

A very bon voyage!