

Figures of Speech in the Bible

What Are They?

- **Words used other than their ordinary way.**
- **Words intending other than literal definitions.**
- **A departure from usual rules to make a point.**
- **Our study will be superficial due to time.**
- **Much more can be found on this broad topic.**

Why Use Them?

- **They add beauty, variety, and force to words.**
- **God chose to use them – lots of them!**
- **They make writing come alive with intensity.**
- **The Holy Spirit chose the figures (I Cor 2:13).**
- **We humbly choose to learn the Spirit's words.**

Why Worry About Them?

- **Missing or ignoring figures leads to errors.**
- **Some take figurative language literally!**
- **Some take literal language figuratively!**
- **Literalists play games with God's truth!**
- **The Bible means what it says and says what it means? Really?**

How Do We Do It?

- **If words are absurd literally, there is a figure.**
- **You then identify the figure and its sense.**
- **Discover the Spirit's intent by the figure.**
- **Convert the figure to literal words to restate.**
- **Let's get started!**

Simile - 1

- **A figure of speech that compares things.**
- **It is usually spotted by “like” or “as.”**
- **Similes directly state the comparison.**
- **Other related figures are not as obvious.**
- **Discover the right aspect of the comparison.**

Simile - 2

- **Example:** *“He is like a bull in a china shop.”*
- **Example:** *“He is as mad as a hornet.”*
- **Example:** *“He is as proud as a peacock.”*
- **Example:** *“He moves like a snail.”*
- **Example:** *“She is as pretty as a picture.”*

Simile - 3

- **Analyze:** *“He is like a bull in a china shop.”*
- **Why is a bull used for the comparison?**
- **His strength?**
- **His weight?**
- **His appetite?**
- **What?**

Simile - 4

- **Keep me **as** the apple of the eye (Ps 17:8).**
- **I am **like** a pelican of the wilderness: I am **like** an owl of the desert (Ps 102:6).**
- **Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, **as** a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even **as** a weaned child (Ps 131:2).**

Simile - 5

- Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been **as** Sodom, and we should have been **like** unto Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:9).
- Behold, I send you forth **as** sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise **as** serpents, and harmless **as** doves (Matt 10:16).
- Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are **like** unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matt 23:27).

Simile - 6

- **Intelligence is able to communicate meaning.**
- **Similes add depth and intensity of meaning.**
- **The Holy Spirit used “like” 581 times!**
- **The Holy Spirit used “as” 2872 times!**
- **There are many similes for us to identify.**
- **They can be spotted and rightly applied.**

Metaphor - 1

- **A comparison by actual representation.**
- **There is no “like” or “as” as clues to find it.**
- **The comparison is transferred without words.**
- **A metaphor declares a thing is another thing!**
- **Extended metaphors are parables, allegories.**
- **Solomon’s proverbs use similes or metaphors.**

Metaphor - 2

- **Simile:** *He is **like** a clumsy ox.*
- **Simile:** *He is **as** clumsy as an ox.*
- **Metaphor:** *He is a clumsy ox!*

Metaphor - 3

- **But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt (Deut 4:20).**
- **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.**
- **For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly (Ps 84:11).**

Metaphor - 4

- **And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life (John 6:35).**
- **Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world (John 8:12).**
- **I am the door (John 10:9).**
- **I am the vine, ye are the branches (Jn 15:5).**

Metaphor - 5

- **Are metaphors important?**
- **They are very important!**
- **Men like you have been killed for a metaphor.**
- **And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: **this is my body**, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.**

I Corinthians 11:24

Metaphor - 6

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: **this is my body, which is broken for you: **this do in remembrance of me.****

I Corinthians 11:24

Would you die for these words as a metaphor?

We must learn more before identifying enemies!

Hypocatastasis - 1

- **The comparison is by implication only.**
- **Only one of the two nouns is stated.**
- **The other noun is out of sight or under (hypo).**
- **The effect is very powerful and moving.**

Hypocatastasis - 2

- **Simile:** *He is **like** a clumsy ox.*
- **Simile:** *He is **as** clumsy as an ox.*
- **Metaphor:** *He is a clumsy ox.*
- **Metaphor:** *He is an ox in his clumsiness.*
- **Hypocatastasis:** **Ox!**

Hypocatastasis - 3

- **Similes are relatively gentle and mild.**
- **Example: You eat like a pig.**
- **Metaphors are more intense than similes.**
- **Example: You are a pig.**
- **Hypocatastases are even more intense.**
- **Example: Pig!**

Hypocatastasis - 4

“And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle” (Judges 14:18).

“For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet” (Ps 22:16).

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19).

Hypocatastasis - 5

21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, **Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.**

Matthew 16:21-23

Metonymy - 1

- **A figure of substitution, not comparison.**
- **An attribute or related aspect is substituted.**
- **One object is replaced by a related object.**
- **One noun disappears – replaced by another.**

Metonymy - 2

- **Example: *Step on the gas.***
- **We substitute the fuel for the accelerator.**
- **We do not mean to stand on gasoline at all.**
- **We replace accelerator with what it controls.**
- **Compare ... *increase your speed.***
- **Compare ... *step on the accelerator.***

Metonymy - 3

- **Example:** *He really used his **head**.*
- **We substitute the location for the brain itself.**
- **We do not mean he banged his skull at all.**
- **We replace brain with where it is found.**
- **Compare ... *he used his brain.***
- **Compare ... *he used his intelligence.***

Metonymy - 4

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”

Proverbs 20:1

- **Here the cause is substituted for the effect.**
- **Wine itself does not mock people or things.**
- **Drunkenness causes mockery and fighting.**
- **Wine is a cause of drunkenness by excess.**

Metonymy - 5

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

Proverbs 29:15

- **Again, the cause is substituted for the effect.**
- **A rod by itself does not give wisdom at all.**
- **Proper corporal punishment teaches wisdom.**
- **The rod is the means of corporal punishment.**

Metonymy - 6

- “Rise up before the **hoary head**” (Lev 19:32).
- “At the **mouth** of two witnesses” (Deut 17:6).
- “There is death in the **pot**” (II Kings 4:40).
- “The **tongue** of the wise is health” (Pr 12:18).
- “The **lip** of truth shall be established” (12:19).
- “The **eyes** of the LORD are in every place.”

Metonymy - 7

- “I have given you **cleanness of teeth**” (Am 4:6).
- “I will give unto thee the **keys of the kingdom.**”
- “They have **Moses and the prophets**; let them hear them” (Luke 16:29).
- “He beareth not the **sword in vain**” (Rom 13:4).
- “Ye cannot drink the **cup of the Lord**, and the **cup of devils**: ye cannot be partakers of the **Lord’s table**, and of the **table of devils.**”

I Cor 10:21

Metonymy - 8

“The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.”

Proverbs 20:30

- **Some guess medically about black and blue.**
- **Others guess about the value of a six-pack!**
- **But here the effect replaces the cause.**
- **A beating, that causes blue wounds, works.**
- **Stripes, the result of a beating, also work.**
- **Flogging, as all once knew, deterred crime.**

Synecdoche - 1

- **Another figure of speech using substitution.**
- **A part of a thing is substituted for the thing.**
- **The whole thing is substituted for only a part.**
- **One noun disappears and another replaces it.**
- **Many kinds of synecdoche are in the Bible.**

Synecdoche - 2

- **Example:** *All **hands** on deck.*
- **What do we mean? Amputation? Amputees?**
- **A part has come to mean the whole sailor.**

- **Example:** *I like your **wheels**.*
- **What do we mean? Round? Shiny? Custom?**
- **Could we mean it literally, a figure, or both?**

Synecdoche - 3

“His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate” (Ps 7:16).

- **Must this verse be literally fulfilled on a head?**
- **See a synecdoche for the wicked man’s life.**
- **Think ... “all heads are counted” as similar.**

Synecdoche - 4

**“The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil:
so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.”**

Proverbs 20:30

- **Do black and blue wounds improve health?**
- **Is a six-pack beneficial to your health?**
- **What wisdom is taught by such nonsense?**
- **Belly is synecdoche for man’s inner being.**

Synecdoche - 5

“Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)”

Philippians 3:19

- **Do they rub the bellies of a fat Buddha?**
- **Do they rub their bellies like a fat Buddha?**
- **Are these merely overeaters? Gluttons?**
- **Or synecdoche ... belly for all carnal lusts?**

Synecdoche - 6

“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

I Timothy 6:10

- **Did Adam eat the forbidden fruit for money?**
- **Did David commit adultery for money?**
- **A synecdoche ... universal words for all kinds!**
- **Is there a metonym and a metaphor here also?**

Synecdoche - 7

“And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the **fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:”**

Genesis 4:4

- **Should fat be burned, not eaten, for health?**
- **Was fat a special gift, rather than the rest?**
- **Or is fat synecdoche for the fattest and best?**
- **See Genesis 45:18, if you have a question?**

Hyperbole - 1

- **A figure of exaggeration or extravagant words.**
- **The figure is not a lie ... because it is obvious.**
- **If you use them ... make them very obvious.**
- **The figure is to intensely make a strong point.**
- **They are common with us and in the Bible.**

Hyperbole - 2

- **Example:** *You scared me to death!*
- **Example:** *I could eat a horse!*
- **Example:** *You're as slow as a snail!*
- **Example:** *That's as old as the hills!*
- **Example:** *Those players are big as Goliath!*

Hyperbole - 3

- **Were Canaan's cities walled up to heaven, as it states in Deut 1:28?**
- **Did the Amalekites have numberless camels, like sand at the beach, as found in Jdgs 7:12?**
- **Did David's bed swim with his tears (Ps 6:6)?**
- **Is Abraham's seed as the dust of the earth?**
- **Had the world gone after Jesus (John 12:19)?**
- **Is Matt 7:3-5 truly about motes and beams?**

Hyperbole - 4

- **How hard to get a camel through a needle?**
- **Must you hate your wife to be a disciple?**
- **Should you pluck out your eyeball if offended?**
- **Did 700 lefthanders sling at a hair's breadth?**
- **Everything is possible, if you believe? How far?**
- **Faith like a mustard seed to move mountains?**

Hyperbole - 5

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that **even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”**

John 21:25

- **Our Lord’s ministry was only 3.5 years long.**
- **And it was only to one very small nation.**
- **How deep can we stack the books worldwide?**
- **John humbly exaggerated the brevity of his gospel in light of all Jesus did in His ministry.**

Hyperbole - 6

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;”

Revelation 17:9

- **Can we know the minimum number in heaven by this text with Methusaleh as counter?**
- **What caused this? A false doctrine to support.**
- **What caused this? Obsession with literalism.**
- **Primary definitions of words is a heresy trap.**

Irony - 1

- **A figure using words to mean the opposite!**
- **The figure is obvious enough to be grasped.**
- **If it is not obviously irony, confusion results.**
- **A lie is not irony, for a lie intends its words.**
- **Example: *Go and ruin your life with drugs.***
- **Example: *You'll never make that shot.***

Irony - 2

- Michal said, “How glorious was the king of Israel to day” (II Sam 6:20).
- Elijah: “Cry aloud: for he is a god” (I Ki 18:27).
- Micaiah: “Go, and prosper, for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king” (I Ki 22:15).
- Job: “No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you” (Job 12:2).
- Ezekiel: “Go ye, serve ye every one his idols.”
- Soldiers: “Hail, King of the Jews!”

Irony - 3

- **“Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you” (I Cor 4:8).**
- **“We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised” (4:10).**
- **“What is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.”**
 - **II Corinthians 12:13**

Irony - 4

“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.”

Genesis 3:22

- **This was Satan’s lie to Eve (Gen 3:5).**
- **Adam and Eve were not more like God at all!**
- **They were less like God than ever before!**

Ellipsis - 1

- **A figure intentionally leaving out words.**
- **Why? To add beauty, brevity, or force.**
- **The missing words are obvious in context.**
- **The missing words are not an accident.**
- **This is not like modern versions in I Sam 13:1.**

Ellipsis - 2

- **Example:** *Sherri loves music more than I.*
- **“Do” is missing; she loves it more than I do.**
- **Example:** *Joe studies banking, Tom baking.*
- **“Studies” is missing; Tom studies baking.**
- **Example:** *The love of money is the source of all evil, and God contentment.*
- **“Love of” and “is the source of” are missing in the second clause but understood by the first.**

Ellipsis - 3

- **“God of” is missing in Psalm 24:6. Metonymy?**
- **“Good” is missing in Prov 18:22 about a wife.**
- **“Rich” is missing in Prov 19:1 about the fool.**
- **“That is surety” is missing in Prov 20:16.**
- **“Is ... to be chosen” is missing in Prov 22:1.**
- **“Regular food ... wine” is missing in Mt 1:18-19.**
- **“Gave the loaves” is missing from Matt 14:19.**
- **“Do mind” is missing from Romans 8:5.**
- **“In order to be saved” is missing from Gal 5:2.**
- **“At a time” should be understood in I Tim 3:2.**

Ellipsis - 4

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal 5:4).

- **This text is used to teach losing salvation.**
- **Justified by the law is IN YOUR DOCTRINE.**
- **Fallen from grace is IN YOUR DOCTRINE.**

Ellipsis - 5

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17).

- **Does this verse mean we cannot be holy? No.**
- **Ye cannot do the things AS WELL AS DESIRED.**
- **Ye cannot do the things WITHOUT CONFLICT.**

Ellipsis - 6

“Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” (I Cor 15:29).

- **Mormons get their baptism for the dead here.**
- **The context is absolutely bodily resurrection.**
- **The middle clause declares this is the thought.**
- **We know baptism for dead relatives is wrong.**
- **The Bible shows us many elliptical phrases.**
- **We assume RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.**
- **We assume HOPE OF DEAD BELIEVERS.**

Euphemism - 1

- **A figure using good words for a bad thing.**
- **Acceptable words used for personal things.**
- **Polite terminology for intimate matters.**
- **They are chosen to be less shocking.**
- **They are chosen to be discretely prudent.**
- **We must not use them to whitewash sin today.**

Euphemism - 2

- **Example: *What is collateral damage?***
- **Example: *What is a sanitation engineer?***
- **Example: *What is revenue enhancement?***
- **Adultery is just that, not having an affair.**
- **Gay is not a proper word for sodomy.**
- **Euthanasia hides patricide or parent killing.**
- **A brat child should not be called hyperactive.**

Euphemism - 3

- **How did Adam know Eve in Genesis 4:1?**
- **How did Abraham go to his fathers in peace?**
- **How did the manner of women stop in Sarah?**
- **Where is a hand that is under your thigh?**
- **Why did Eglon and Saul cover their feet?**

Dysphemism - 1

- **A figure using bad words for an ordinary thing.**
- **Unpleasant words used for regular things.**
- **Crude speech expressing passion or vulgarity.**
- **Why? To make a strong point in an argument.**
- **Think toilet. Is it a water closet or a crapper?**

Dysphemism - 2

- **Who of Nabal's house did David want to kill?**
- **How did Rabshakeh suggest surrender?**
- **What will God do to rebels in sin (Ps 50:22)?**
- **How did David pray for the wicked (58:6-11)?**
- **How did God use Ezekiel 16 and 23 to exhort?**

Personification

- **Abstract or spiritual things are made a person.**
- **We use Father Time, Lady Liberty, and Mother Nature for well-understood concepts.**
- **Solomon used this extensively in Proverbs (1:20-33; 2:4; 3:15-18; 4:5-13; 8:1-36; 9:1-5).**
- **Missing this results in hallucinations about an eternal daughter of God in Proverbs 8.**

Parables - 1

- **Are obscure, extended similes or metaphors.**
- **Similes and metaphors use comparisons.**
- **Parables are not earthly stories for the simple.**
- **They are dark sayings hiding truth from most.**
- **The key to a parable is to identify the lesson rather than nitpick the details serving it.**

Parables - 2

- **The Good Samaritan: What is the lesson? Which details are important? Two pence?**
- **The Prodigal Son: What is the lesson? Should fathers give an inheritance to whoremongers?**
- **The Sower: What is the lesson? Is it valuable for farmers? Speculation about regeneration?**
- **The Unjust Steward: What is the lesson? Does it approve fraud? Is it for getting an MBA?**

“This is my body.”

- **Are you ready to defend and die for this figure?**
- **Our fathers in the faith have died for this text.**
- **Do you know anything about Lady Jane?**
- **How about Bloody Mary?**
- **Denominations have been destroyed here.**

“This is my body.”

- **Catholics are literalists here (usually not).**
- **They love primary definitions of words here.**
- **They deny there is any figure of speech here.**
- **They believe Jesus meant what He said.**
- **In Latin the words are: *Hoc est corpus meum.***
- **This is the start of Hocus-Pocus. Their heresy!**
- **They invented transubstantiation: the bread is the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus.**

“This is my body.”

- **Lutherans do not want to be Catholics.**
- **But they accept the cracker as truly God.**
- **But they can still see and taste the cracker.**
- **So they invented consubstantiation, meaning that Jesus is literally in and with the cracker.**
- **How? They see a synecdoche in the word “body,” being part of the whole combination.**

“This is my body.”

- **Presbyterians try to avoid both heresies.**
- **But they still love Rome’s sacramentalism.**
- **They believe Jesus really offers Himself in the bread spiritually and really and indeed.**
- **How? They see a metonym in the word “body,” for there is an association of the bread to Him.**

“This is my body.”

- **The truth is a metaphor!**
- **Would you die for the truth on this point?**
- **It is a figure of speech like “I am the door.”**
- **The figure is not in “body,” but rather in “is.”**
- **The bread merely represents His body.**
- **Compare “this cup is the New Testament”!**
- **It is done only to remember, not to confer.**