

We believe in a literal, historical, grammatical interpretation of the Bible.

FIGURES OF SPEECH

1. Always interpret a passage literally unless there is good reason for doing otherwise.
2. If the literal meaning is absurd, the figurative meaning is intended. Examples:
Psalm 18:2, "The Lord is my rock."
John 6:53-58, "... eat my flesh and drink my blood"
"The Lamb of God"
"tickled to death", "It doesn't hold water"
3. The figurative meaning is a colorful vehicle for presenting literal truth.
4. Figurative language is not antithetical to literal interpretation but is part of it.
5. Figures of speech add color or vividness, make abstract ideas more concrete, aid in retention, and encourage reflection.
6. Don't get carried away in the interpretation of figures of speech. Place legitimate constraints on your interpretation. Use logic and language. When the Lord said He would come "like a thief in the night," He did not mean He was coming to rob.
7. People get into trouble when they start to allegorize the Bible. Allegorizing is searching for a hidden or secret meaning underlying but remote from and unrelated in reality to the more obvious meaning of a text. In this approach the literal is superficial; the allegorical is the true meaning. *Basic Bible Interpretation, Roy B. Zuk, p. 29*
8. Martin Luther denounced the allegorical approach to the Scriptures in strong words. "Allegories are empty speculations and as it were the scum of Holy Scripture." "Origen's allegories are not worth so much dirt."

FIGURES OF SPEECH:

Simile: Comparison using "*like*" or "*as*".

"I am sending you out like lambs among wolves."

Metaphor: Comparison in which one thing is, acts like, or represents another.

"All flesh is grass"

Metonymy: Substituting one word for another.

"A decision was made by the White House"

[meaning "by the president"]

Anthropomorphism: Ascribing human physical characteristics to God. ***“eyes, ears, fingers, arm, of the Lord”***

Anthropopathism: Ascribing human characteristics to God.
“I am very jealous for Zion.”

Zoomorphism: Ascribing animal characteristics to God or others. ***Psalms 91:4, “God will cover you with His feathers”***

Ellipsis: An omission of a word or words needed to complete a sentence grammatically. ***2 Timothy 4:18, The Lord will save me [and bring me] to His heavenly kingdom.***

“the twelve” = “the twelve apostles”

Hyperbole: A deliberate exaggeration in order to add emphasis.

“We became like grasshoppers in their sight . . .”

“Saul has killed his thousands and David his tens of thousands”

Litotes: The opposite of hyperbole. The understatement or negative statement to express an affirmation.

“He is not a bad singer” meaning he is a very good singer. Acts 27:20, . . . no small storm was assailing us.

Irony: Ridicule expressed indirectly in the form of a compliment.

2 Samuel 6:20, “Michal said to David, ‘How the king has distinguished himself today.’

Personification: Ascribing human characteristics or actions to inanimate objects or ideas to animals. ***“The mountains and hills will break forth with joy before you” “The trees will clap their hands” Isaiah 55:12***

Euphemism: The substitution of a mild or inoffensive expression for an offensive or personal one. ***“Adam knew [had sexual intercourse with] Eve his wife, and she conceived . . .***

Synecdoche: The substituting a part of something for the whole or the whole for the part. ***“The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all other dwellings of Jacob.” Psalm 87:2*** Gates represents the whole of the city.

Paronomasia: This is using the same words or similar sounding words to suggest different meanings. A paronomasia is sometimes called a “play on words” or a pun.