

Figures of Speech

Anthropomorphism

The attribution of human features or actions to God.

“The Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear” (Isaiah 59:1).

Apostrophe

Addressing a thing as if it were a person, or an absent or imaginary person as if he were present.

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Euphemism

The use of a less offensive expression to indicate a more offensive one.

“Would that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves” (Galatians 5:12).

Hyperbole

Exaggeration to say more than is literally meant.

“I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve you” (2 Corinthians 11:8).

Hypocatastasis

A comparison in which likeness is implied rather than stated directly.

“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1).

Idiom

An expression peculiar to a particular people.

“And [Samson] said, ‘I will go in to my wife in her room’ ” (Judges 15:1).

Merism

A substitution of two contrasting or opposite parts for the whole.

“Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up” (Psalm 139:2).

Metaphor

A comparison in which one thing represents another.

“You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

REAL TALK FROM THE WORD

Paradox

A statement that seems absurd, self-contradictory, or contrary to logical thought.

“Whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:25).

Personification

Ascribing human characteristics or actions to inanimate objects or animals.

“The moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed” (Isaiah 24:23).

Rhetorical question

A question that requires no response, yet forces one to answer mentally and consider its ramifications.

“In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Psalm 56:11).

Simile

A comparison using “like” or “as.”

“He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water” (Psalm 1:3).¹

¹ Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, [*Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible*](#) (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 271–272.