

OTHER PRINCIPLES OF SPEECH

1. Rhetorical question. A rhetorical question is contrasted with a direct question. A direct question expects an answer. A rhetorical question is asked to emphasize a point, but a direct answer is not expected. Rhetorical questions are used to make arguments convincing. God asked Abraham, "Is there anything too hard for the Lord" (Genesis 18:14). He did not expect Abraham to answer directly, but to think about it.
2. Hyperbole. This is an intentional exaggeration for emphasis. When we say, "I told you a million times," that is an example of hyperbole. The Psalmist used hyperbole when he said, "My eyes shed streams of tears: (Psalm 119:136). Rivers were not literally flowing from his eyes, but he was expressing his grief emphatically.
3. Irony. This figure of speech says the opposite of what it means. It is used for emphasis. When irony is used the speaker's tone of voice reveals it. Since we cannot hear the tone in the Bible, we must be sure that it is in fact irony. Irony is a form of sarcasm. Study the context carefully before determining that irony is being used. King David's wife said of him sarcastically, "How the king of Israel honored himself today" (II Samuel 6:20). She actually meant the opposite, that he had made a fool out of himself or was an embarrassment. When you are uncertain if something is said in irony, consider it in a straightforward way and see if it makes sense. If it doesn't, then assume it is irony.

There are many other figures of speech in the Bible, but these are some of the most common ones. Figures of speech add color and emphasis to language. God's Word is all the more fascinating when we understand how the authors used figures of speech when they wrote.