



Adult Learning Opportunity
Next Steps with the Bible: Going Deeper and Growing Stronger

David Turner • profdlit@gmail.com • drdavidturner.com

October 30: Understanding Biblical Poetry: It's about Parallel Ideas not Rhyme

1. Review of Week 6: Narrative

- Getting the **genre** right: *historical* fidelity, *literary* creativity, and *pastoral* sensitivity
- Reading as active, engaged participants, not passive, detached observers.
- Plot (comedy or tragedy), characterization (heroes and villains), and point of view
- OT narrative and Jude 11

2. What is the difference between prose and poetry?

- Prose is simple, straightforward, ordinary, unimaginative language.
 - *The Edmund Fitzgerald was loaded with 26,000 tons of iron ore when she sank in a bad storm on November 10, 1975.*
- Poetry is imaginative, creative, evocative language.
 - *With a load of iron ore 26,000 tons more than the Edmund Fitzgerald weighed empty,
That good ship and true was a bone to be chewed when the gales of November came early.* (Lightfoot)
- Without occasional poetic expressions (figures of speech), prose becomes tedious and boring.
- Poetry's main characteristic is its pervasive use **metaphor**, comparing abstract ideas to concrete items.
- Although some types of poetry uses **rhyme** as a structural device, this is not a major feature of biblical poetry, which is characterized by **parallelism** of lines/ideas.
 - A . . . **what's more** . . . B.
 - "What's more" in line B may restate A more emphatically ("and"), state a contrast to line A ("but"), or describe a purpose ("so that"), reason ("because") condition ("if"), or concession ("although") of line A.
 - Two very common types of parallelism:
 - Synonymous:** the two lines say roughly the same thing, although the second expands the first:
Oh how I love your instruction!
I think about them all day long. (Ps 119:97 NLT)
 - Antithetical:** the two lines express contrasting or opposing ideas:
I hate and abhor all falsehood,
But I love your instructions. (Ps 119:163)

3. Where do we find poetry in the Bible?

- Psalms (duh . . .)
 - Embedded in other books, especially prophecy and wisdom, but even in narrative, as in *Genesis* 1:27; 2:23; 4:23; *Luke* 1:46-55; 68-79; 2:14; 29-32.
 - Where do we find poetic elements in *Jude*?
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