



## CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE?

By Brett Hickey

Of all the themes in the New Testament, the unity of all believers is among the most predominant. In fact, pleas for unity in the faith and in understanding the word of God resound throughout the scriptures. Jesus Himself prays for unity when he speaks to God on behalf of the apostles, entreating that they be "one" so "that the world may believe that you have sent me..." (John 17:20-23).

Professing disciples in every age have expected their own prayers to be heard but have shown little interest in responding to Jesus' prayer for unity. Some say embracing all belief systems will lead to unity, but this conclusion ignores Jesus' earlier teaching that God's word is the basis for unity (John 17:17).

The apostle Paul made a similar plea in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "...speak the same thing... that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." While some find many bodies, faiths and baptisms acceptable, the Holy Spirit speaks of "one body...one faith, [and] one baptism" (Ephesians 4:4-5; Jude 3).

We can "speak the same thing" only if we "rightly divide the word of God" (2 Timothy 2:15) and determine whether or not a word, phrase, or passage is used literally. Failing to do so leads inevitably to doctrinal error and division.

Howard Hendricks' *Living by the Book* and D. R. Dungan's *Hermeneutics* provide commonly accepted rules to use in recognizing figurative language in the Bible. Consider one of these rules: a word or sentence is figurative when the literal meaning is impossible. Always take the literal sense unless

# Newsletter

December 2016

Let the Bible Speak  
PO Box 292921 • Lewisville, TX 75029

1-800-380-5827

Airing Each Sunday At 6:30 AM on **21** TXA

the literal sense makes nonsense. In John 3:3, Jesus says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We cannot literally re-enter our mother's womb. The new birth is figurative: one born of water and of the spirit (John 3:5) arises from the waters of baptism a new creature; hence, Jesus' figure directly implies baptism is required to enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus says in Luke 9:60, "Let the dead bury the dead." A dead man cannot bury another dead man, so, we know "figurative language" is employed. Jesus is saying the spiritually dead should bury the physically dead.

In 1 Corinthians 11:26, Paul writes, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." We cannot drink a literal cup, so figurative language (metonymy) is used to refer to the literal contents of a literal cup. Warning: figurative use of a word in one place does not redefine the meaning of the word.

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## December TV Broadcast Schedule

**12/4**

Sermon #1072

Is There Anything in a Name?

**12/11**

Sermon #1073

Q & A: Christian Chronicle on Lord's Supper

**12/18**

Sermon #1074

Value of a Soul

**12/25**

Sermon #1076

Jesus' Impact on the World

If a man tells his wife the kettle is boiling, he must refer to the contents, not the kettle. The husband could later ask his wife where she got the kettle. Since the second use of kettle can be taken literally, it must be taken literally.

Similarly, we know Jesus used baptism figuratively when he asked, "Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" We cannot superimpose that figurative use on a passage where baptism can be taken literally. The literal meaning of baptism, incidentally, is to dip, plunge or immerse in water or in some other liquid. This definition is critical, for instance, in Galatians 3:27 where the Bible says, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Does literal baptism make nonsense here? No! Therefore, we must take this passage as a literal reference to baptism.

We must distinguish between literal and figurative language to understand the Bible alike. Arbitrarily picking and choosing which words and expressions are figurative is really squeezing the Scriptures into a preconceived doctrinal mold. It will result in an inconsistent application of rules of interpretation, and we will be reading into the Biblical text instead of getting out of the Bible what God intended.



Audio / video library, transcripts and other information can be found at:  
**[www.LetTheBibleSpeak.com](http://www.LetTheBibleSpeak.com)**



Check out Let the Bible Speak on Facebook. Post questions and interact with Brett Hickey and others at:  
**[www.facebook.com/LBSunityseeker](https://www.facebook.com/LBSunityseeker)**



Watch videos of our program at:  
**[www.youtube.com/LetTheBibleSpeak](https://www.youtube.com/LetTheBibleSpeak)**

## Upcoming Gospel Meetings

**December 2-4**

**South Walnut CHURCH OF CHRIST**

306 South Walnut Street

Cleburne, TX

Speaker: Brett Hickey

7:30 pm (2nd)

6:00 pm (3rd)

10:30 am & 2:30 PM (4th)

We support Brett Hickey's message, and the truths taught in the Bible for all mankind. We assist bringing this TV program to the north Texas area, and are glad you have watched the program! We would like you to visit any of our worship services!

### **Allen**

**East Allen CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1008 E. Exchange Parkway  
Allen, TX

### **Arlington**

**CHURCH OF CHRIST on Green Oaks**

4601 S. W. Green Oaks Blvd.  
Arlington, TX

### **Bridgeport**

**East Mound CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Highway 2123, 1.5 miles south of town  
Bridgeport, TX

### **Canton**

**Phalba CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Hwy 198 between Maybank & Canton  
at Hwy 316 intersection  
Phalba, TX

### **Cleburne**

**South Walnut CHURCH OF CHRIST**

306 South Walnut Street  
Cleburne, TX

### **Dallas**

**Dallas CHURCH OF CHRIST**

122 Carol Lane  
Red Oak, TX

### **Dallas (Spanish speaking services)**

**Dallas CHURCH OF CHRIST**

2802 Walton Walker Boulevard  
Dallas, TX

### **Duncanville**

**Duncanville CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1615 Stratford Lane  
Duncanville, TX

### **Fort Worth**

**Fossil Creek CHURCH OF CHRIST**

3517 North Beach Street  
Fort Worth, TX

### **Frisco**

**CHURCH OF CHRIST in Frisco**

9201 North County Road  
Frisco, TX

### **Grapevine**

**CHURCH OF CHRIST in Grapevine**

713 North Lucas Drive  
Grapevine, TX

### **Lewisville**

**Denton county CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1305 S. Business State Highway 121,  
Suite 105  
Lewisville, TX

### **Mineral Wells**

**Mineral Wells CHURCH OF CHRIST**

300 Southeast 15th Street  
Mineral Wells, TX

### **Paris**

**Paris CHURCH OF CHRIST**

35 13th Street S.E.  
Paris, TX

### **Rockwall**

**Northview CHURCH OF CHRIST**

NE corner of I-30 Frontage & Industrial  
Blvd  
Rockwall, TX

### **Weatherford**

**Bankhead Drive CHURCH OF CHRIST**

2610 East Bankhead Drive  
Weatherford, TX