

bear false witness

Usage: A phrase meaning ‘to lie’.

Context: The ninth of the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses for the regulation of his people. Lying, especially in a legal context and against someone who has a call on one’s loyalty (one’s ‘neighbour’), is destructive and abhorrent to God.

Exodus 20.16 see also Deuteronomy 5.20

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.



Behemoth

Usage: Refers to any monstrously big and powerful creature or object; Thomas Hobbes named the Long Parliament as Behemoth in his book *Behemoth*.

Context: Perhaps an elephant or hippopotamus. In the context of Job, God asks Job to consider the animal and marvel at the works of God.

Job 40.15

*Behold now behemoth, Which I made with thee;
He eateth grass as an ox.*

being beside oneself

Usage: Having lost one’s grip on reality, especially through rage.

Context: Festus hears Paul’s defence of his faith in Christ and concludes he is mad. Paul responds ‘I am not mad, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness’.

Acts 26.24

And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

bite, or lick, the dust

Usage: Fall to the ground, wounded or dead; used in many cowboy films where the bad guy ‘bites the dust’.

Context: In the Bible the term ‘lick the dust’ is used twice. In Psalm 72 it is used to describe someone who lies prostrate before God, so low that they can lick the dust. In Micah 7 the term is used to refer to someone who fears the Lord and comes out of their hole to lick the dust like a serpent.

Psalm 72.9 see also Micah 7.17

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; And his enemies shall lick the dust.

blind leading the blind

Usage: Refers to bad leaders appointed by people who do not discern their unsuitability for leadership.

Context: In the biblical context Jesus refers to the Pharisees whose teachings prevent the people from responding to God.

Matthew 15.14

Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

book of life

Usage: If one's name is in the book of life, one is saved from punishment for sin, safe, or blessed.

Context: The biblical image (frequent in Revelation) refers to the records opened on the Day of Judgement. In a culture where books were valuable and rare the book connotes permanence; the book of life is the record of those saved by Christ.



Revelation 3.5

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

born again

Usage: A term used to describe someone who has a religious conversion to Christianity; also used for people who return to a previous hobby, e.g. born again bikers are motorcyclists who return to motorcycling later in life; the title of a book by Watergate conspirator, Chuck Colson (1976).

Context: Jesus used the term 'born again' in the Bible whilst teaching Nicodemus, a Rabbi of the Jewish sect known as the Pharisees. The traditional Jewish understanding of the promise of salvation was that being rooted in 'the seed of Abraham' referred to physical lineage from Abraham. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that every person must have two births – the natural birth of the physical body, the other of the water and the spirit. This discourse with Nicodemus established the Christian belief that all human beings must be 'born again' of the spiritual seed of Christ. In the Bible, to be 'born again' is associated with terms including new birth, resurrection and new life. Peter also uses the term in one of his letters.

John 3.3–7 see also 1 Peter 1.23

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

born of woman

Usage: Human; mortal and imperfect. 'Not of woman born' is an important phrase in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Of Woman Born* is the title of a book of essays on motherhood by Adrienne Rich.

Context: Humanity is imperfect and fallible. In the New Testament this phrase is echoed in Galatians 4.4 where Paul teaches that Christ's human obedience redeems human nature.

Job 14.1 see also **Job 15.14; Matthew 11.11**

Man that is born of a woman Is of few days, and full of trouble.

bottomless pit

Usage: A description of an unpleasant situation which cannot be resolved and which swallows up all one's resources.

Context: In the book of Revelation where it occurs frequently this is an image of hell, the place of the Beast.

Revelation 9.2

And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

bowels of compassion

Usage: Deep feeling.

Context: In the age when the King James Bible was translated and published (1611) the emotions were thought of as being seated in the bowels; today they are in the heart. Both imply something deep and powerful.

1 John 3.17

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

