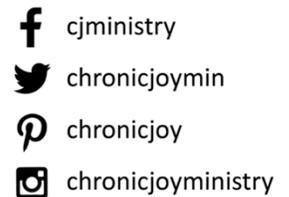


CHRONIC JOY
chronic illness ministry



Allegory

Allegory is a beautiful, artistic form of storytelling that weaves difficult or abstract truths in ways that are easily relatable and understandable. Meaning is often woven through places and characters named for their qualities, strengths or weaknesses.

There are many famous examples of allegory including: C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Aesop's *The Tortoise and the Hare*, Dr. Seuss' *Yertle the Turtle*, Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, and T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*.

Let's take a little closer look at three: the Medieval play, *Everyman*, Hannah Hurnard's *Hind Feet on High Places*, and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

The main character in *Everyman* is called by God to account for his life, but as death comes, Everyman realizes he's not ready, that his life is not in order, so he stalls, asking for more time. Death refuses, but will allow Everyman a companion for his journey. Everyman calls Kindred, Cousin and Goods, but they won't join him. Eventually, Good Deeds agrees, summoning Beauty, Strength, Discretion and Five Wits, who travel together to the sacrament. Here again, all abandon Everyman, except for Good Deeds, who walks side-by-side with him into the grave.

John Bunyan's famous *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written in 1678, is a similar story. Here the main character, Christian, travels from his hometown, the City of Destruction to the Celestial City at the top of Mount Zion. Along the way, he meets characters like Evangelist, Obstinate and Pliable, Mr. Legality and his son Civility, and Faithful, Hopeful and Ignorance, journeying through places like the Slough of Despond, the village of Morality, the Hill of Difficulty and the Valley of the Shadow of Death. As Christian travels, we learn much about him and much about his companions.



Hinds' Feet on High Places, written in 1955, is the story of a young woman named Much Afraid who leaves her family, the Fearings, and is guided into the Shepherd's High Places by her two faithful companions Sorrow and Suffering. This allegory, whose title is taken from Habakkuk 3:19 KJV, "The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places," is the story of the Christian life from salvation through maturity.

Much Afraid's journey begins in the Valley of Humiliation where we learn that she has club feet, gnarled hands and a crooked mouth, yet she secretly holds a dream of dancing on the High Places and when she hints at this to the Shepherd, He offers to "plant the seed of love" into her heart.

The Bible too, includes ancient allegories – The Parables – to teach important truths that are easily remembered.

Now It's Your Turn

Take some time and explore the distinction between *worry* and *concern* by writing your own short allegory.

Begin by describing the two main characters -- *Worry* and *Concern*.

Choose a "problem" for your characters to face. Consider choosing something that worries or upsets you.

As you work through the plot, consider how each of your characters interacts with the problem.

- ④ What happens to each? Do they grow or remain the same?
- ④ What obstacles do they face?
- ④ Who are their companions?
- ④ What is the outcome for each?
- ④ Which of your characters reacts more like you do? Does that surprise you?

Understanding how we view our circumstances can begin to change the way we react to them. Story, because it is relatable, memorable and often unobtrusive, can help us to see with new eyes.

Keep your allegory characters in mind this week. Think about how they might react to the various situations you experience and consider journaling your insights.

