**Syndeton**

The figure of speech syndeton is a grammatical device that uses a conjunction, most commonly “and,” to join together words or phrases. There are three types of syndeton for lists. Standard grammar uses the simple syndeton which has a comma after each item in the list, but with “and” occurring before the last item. For example, “You need celery, apples, walnuts, and grapes to make this salad.” The second type of syndeton is asyndeton which means “no ands.” By omitting the “and,” the same sentence would be, “You need celery, apples, walnuts, grapes to make this salad.” This structure increases the reading pace, putting less emphasis on each item and moving quickly to the purpose or main point of the sentence. In contrast, the opposite is polysyndeton, which means “many ands.” This is when the conjunction “and” appears between each item in the list, as in, “You will need celery and apples and walnuts and grapes to make this salad.” Here the emphasis is placed on each individual item in the list as being an equally critical factor. Polysyndeton helps to slow the reader down so that they can take in all the information and carefully consider the importance of each item on the list.

Both asyndeton and polysyndeton are departures from normal grammatical usage. They are figures of speech that God uses in His Word to place emphasis on specific aspects of a statement. They let us know what we should pay attention to as we read. Here are two examples of asyndeton:

1. Galatians 5:22-23 – “But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”  
     
   The main point of this verse is the conclusion, putting the emphasis on “against such things there is no law.” The figure asyndeton shows that this is not an exhaustive list but rather gives us an idea of what the fruit of the spirit looks like, especially in contrast to the works of the flesh listed in the previous verses.
2. Ephesians 4:32 – “and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God has forgiven you in Christ.”  
     
   The running list of commands points to how and why we are to behave toward each other—“as God has forgiven you.”

The next group of verses contains polysyndeton. Notice how the emphasis is put on each individual item in each list.

1. Mark 12:28-30 – 28“And one of the experts in the law came and heard them disputing together, and recognizing that he had answered them well, asked him, ‘What commandment is the first of all?’ 29Jesus answered, ‘The first is**, Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone, 30and so you are to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’”**  
     
   The polysyndeton stresses that we are to love God with each and every part of our being (i.e., our heart, our soul, and our mind), thus putting Him first in our lives with all that we are.
2. Genesis 8:22 – “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night will not cease.”
3. Joshua 6:23 – “So the young men, the spies, went in and brought out Rahab and her father, and her mother, and her brothers and all that she had; all her relatives they also brought out, and they settled them outside of the camp of Israel.”
4. John 10:27-28 – “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,  
    and I give to them life in the age *to come,* and they will absolutely not perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

To see more uses of and commentary about figures of speech used in the Bible, use the [REV search tool](http://revisedenglishversion.com/search), and articles on figures of speech can also be found at: [stfi.org/tag/figures/](https://stfi.org/tag/figures/).

[For asyndeton and polysyndeton, see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979. Originally published by Eyre and Spottiswoode: London, 1898), 137-48, 208-37.]