
NAMES AND IMAGES OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE

HOW WE EXPERIENCE AND NAME / IMAGE GOD INFLUENCES OUR LIVES

- No one has seen God, people have experiences of God, have felt the presence of God or discerned something about activity of God in world. God remains a mystery, beyond reach of our eyes and comprehension of our minds. When it comes to God we have to use our imaginations. On basis of our religious experiences, we form images of God and tell stories of God's activities, images and stories more or less adequate to the mystery they attempt to describe.
- Scripture never gives us a definition of God but speaks to us in the language of the imagination – images, metaphors, stories. Obviously no one image which says it all. Employ many images of different sorts, to express various facets of a mystery that transcends all imaging. Each image embodies a partial insight. Even if we put them all together we still have not comprehended the mystery.
- Need to remember that an image is only an image and not to confuse it with the reality itself.
- We each carry within ourselves images of who God is supposed to be, of what we believe God is responsible for, of who God is. This influences how we see ourselves, how we understand our role and responsibility in the world, how we pray and what we think religion is.
- Our images are formed by many factors: family, prayer & worship experiences, school and parish communities, what we hear others say to and about God .
- Everything teaches. We need to help students shape their image of God into one that is wholesome, healthy, and whole, one that calls forth and solidifies an intimate love relationship with God.
- Need to be aware of warped or distorted images of God present in our current world
 - **A God who tests** - a loving God does not tease, tempt or test us
 - **God the disciplinarian – the police person of our lives.** This places a distance between God and us and is one who will leave us alone as long as we obey.
 - **God the business person** – provides salvation in return for specified services. God loves us, there are no qualifications to unconditional love. Reality is when we experience this love, our only response is to want to be good and to do good things – not because we have a business pact with God
 - **God of prize & punishment** - . Love is beyond reward and punishment because fear of punishment all but renders love impossible
 - **God whose coming we control** – Give false notion of God when we pray Please come and be with us. God is with us, God is never far away from us. Our prayer needs to ask God's help to make us more aware./ alive to the presence of God everywhere. This is where we tell God what to do in our prayers of intercession rather than asking for God's strength and courage.
 - **God who is in heaven** – God as very transcendent, all-knowing, all powerful without a balance of very immanent, always close at hand, loving can make God seem very unapproachable. God in heaven needs saints and angels as go-betweens in our relationship with God. Although saints and angels have an important place in communion of saints and the interconnection of all creation, our relationship with God needs to be very personal and very comfortable.
- **Julian of Norwich:** "This I am .. I am the capability and goodness found in fatherhood; I am the sensitivity and wisdom of motherhood; I am the light and grace that is all loving and right; I am in All; I am the One in everyone; I am what makes you want to love others; I am what you will serve; I am what the pure heart desires; I am what your highest self intends; I am your father, your mother, your sister, your brother; learn of my joy, live in my love, for that is what I am."
- **Need to always mention God** – connect to lessons on church, sacraments, justice, peace etc. Talk about God in the present experience. Be willing to share your faith. Talk about your

experiences of God and your images of God. Help students become familiar with various images of God in scripture.

TRINITY

- We teach that God is Trinitarian – triune: that there is some kind of threeness in the one God. Three persons in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit The one God has three ways of being – not three centers of consciousness and freedom, personalities.
- Central symbol of God's love for us. The Father begets the Son and breathes forth the Spirit with the sole purpose of being love and inviting all of creation to join and participate in that reality.
- Meant for relationship: communion, 3 persons in dynamic, intimate, passionate, loving relationship. Community of persons. God's passion for us moves us to passion toward God and others. God's nature is relational – heart of divine mystery is community – bound together in relationships of mutuality and equality
- Love of persons of God is inherently generative and outpours into creation; generative, moves outward to others, life-giving and creating, fruitful. Reality of particular care for suffering, poor, outcast, marginalized.

PERSONAL – FEMALE

Birth God – womb

- Gen 7:1 use of breasts as female image of God
- Deut. 32: 18 You forget the rock who begot you, unmindful of the God who gave you birth
- Job 38:8 who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?
- Job 38: 28 – 29 God's fathering of rain and giving birth to ice from her womb
- Isaiah 42: 14 I groan like a woman in labour, I will gasp and pant
- Isaiah 46: 3 – 4 You who have been carried since birth, whom I have carried since time you were born – image of womb
- John 1:12 Those who believe in God born of God
- John 4:7 everyone who loves is born of God
- John 16:21 implies suffering to bring forth new humanity – could be compared to pangs of woman in labour, in sorrow because her hour has come
- Acts 17 In God we live and move and have our being
- Gal 4:19 God's womb pain
- Romans 8:22 From the beginning to now the entire creation has been groaning in one great act of giving birth (creation)

Creator God of Israel is also imaged as the shaper, maker and mother God who formed Israel in the womb and birthed Israel with labour pains.

- (Deut. 32:18; Psalm 90:2; Proverbs 8:24 – 25; Isaiah 43:1,7,15; 44:2, 24; 45:9, 11; 51:13; 54:5 From the word "womb" (rehem) comes the verb "to have compassion" (raham), and the phrase "Yahweh's compassionate (raham) and gracious" repeatedly appears in the Hebrew scripture to describe the merciful and saving acts of God in history. (Deut. 4:31; 2 Chr 30:9; Neh9:17; Ps 78:38; 86:16; 103:8; 111:4; 112:4; 145:8; John 4:7 These verses show images of God who demonstrates "womb – like compassion" for her child Israel.
- God creator is sometimes depicted as woman giving birth and sometimes a reproductive image of God as both male and female: Deut 32:18; Job 38:28 – 29; Is 42:14; Acts 17; John 16:21; Gal 4:19; Rom 8:22; John 1:12;

Nursing mother

- Isaiah 49:15 does a woman forget her baby at the breast, or fail to cherish the son (daughter) of her womb
- Numbers 11:12 was it I who conceived all this people, was it I who gave them birth that you should say to me, carry them in your bosom like a nurse with a baby at the breast

- Psalm 131:2 – 3 But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul within me is like a weaned child.
- John 7: 38 From his breast shall flow the fountains of living water
- 1 Peter 2:2 – 3 You are newborn and like babies you should be hungry for nothing but milk – now that you have tasted the goodness of Christ

Nurturing God – mother

- Gen 1 :2 nesting mother
- Deut 32 : 11 – 12 mother eagle
- Hosea 11:34 I myself taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in my arms
- Hosea 13: 8 I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs
- Psalm 131 image of repose – like a child in its mother's arms as content as a child that has been weaned
- Ps 17:8 guard me in the shadow of your wings
- Ps 36:7 all people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings
- Ps 57:1 in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge
- Ps 61:4 find refuge under the shelter of your wings
- Isaiah 31:5 like birds hovering overhead, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem
- Isaiah 46:3 - 4 who have been borne by me from your birth carried from the womb... even when you turn gray, I will carry you. I have made and I will bear, I will carry and will save
- Isaiah 66: 10 –13 comforting mother..... as a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you
- Luke 15:8 woman tirelessly sweeping for her lost coin, for what is important to her
- Luke 13: 34 (Matt 23:37), how often I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings

Other images

- Ruah – Gen 2:7, Ps 104: 29; Jn 3:8 presence gives life; feminine Hebrew word meaning breath, wind, inspiration or spirit.
- Rahamin Hebrew word for compassion – root word, rahan, means womb.
- El Shaddai – God of the mountains or God of the breasts
- Seamstress – Gen 3:21
- Washerwoman Isaiah 4:4, Psalm 51:7
- Midwife Psalm 22:9 – 11, Psalm 71:6; Isaiah 66:9
- Woman baking bread Matt 13:33
- Seeks justice Proverbs 8:18

PERSONAL – MALE

Father

- Deut. 32:6 Is he not your father, who created you, who made you and established you?
- Psalm 89: 26 – 27 You are my Father, my God
- Jeremiah 31:9, 3:14, 22; Mal 1:6 I have become a father to Israel
- Isaiah 64:8 O Lord you are our Father, we are the clay, and you are the potter; we are the work of your hands
- 2 Samuel 14 I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me
- Hosea 11:1, Jeremiah 31:20 God stands as father in relation to his people because he has chosen them
- Mark 6:9, Luke 11:2 teaches Our father
- Mark 14:36 Abba, father, for all you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.

- **John 20:17** I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.
- **Matthew 5:48** Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect
- **Matthew 28:19** baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
- **Romans 8: 15** when we cry, "Abba Father!"
- **Matthew 6:32** your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things
- **Luke 15** compassionate father who welcomes son back
- **Adoptive father** Romans 8:15, Gal 4:4 – 6
- **Comforting father** 2 Thess 2:16 – 17
- **Everlasting Father** Isaiah 9:6
- **Heavenly father** Matt 6:26

Personal names & images - masculine

- **Abba** Mk 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6
- **Bridegroom** Song of Sol 2:3,4, 10 –14; Is 62:4,5; Zeph 3:17; Ps 45:10, 11
- **King** Psalm 24:7, Psalm 47:7, Dan 4:37
- **King of kings** 1 Tim 6:15, Rev. 19:16
- **Lord** Num 3:44, Ps 24:10, Lk 9:54
- **Lord of hosts** – Jer 32:18
- **Lord of Lords** 1 Tim 6:15, Rev 19:16
- **Lord of Peace** 2 thess 3:16
- **Prince of Peace** Isaiah 9:6
- **Sovereign Lord** Rev. 6:10
- **Husband** Is 45:5, Hos 2:16, 19 – 20, Rom 7:4
- **Shepherd** Gen49:24, Luke 15: 3- 7; Peter 2:28, Ps 23
- **Beloved bridegroom** Song of Sol 2:3, 4, 10 – 14, Is 62:4, 5

Hebrew scriptures

- **Yahweh** – I am the one who is always present and active. I am who I am. I will be who I will be
- **Ei Elyon** – the God most high Gen. 14:18 – 19
- **Ei Oman** – the eternal God Gen. 21:33
- **Ei Berith** – the God of the covenant Judges 9:46

I AM STATEMENTS

- **I am who I am** Exodus 3:14
- **I am the bread of life** John 6: 25 – 35 48
- **I am the good shepherd** John 10:11 - 18
- **I am the resurrection and the life** John 11:17 - 27
- **I am the light of the world** John 8:12 – 16
- **I am the gate for the sheep** John 10: 1 - 10
- **I am the way and the truth and the life** John 14:1 – 14
- **I am the vine** John 15:1 - 11

PARABLES

Mt 13 sower who sows good seed

Lk 14 gracious host who invites all to banquet

Mt 20 vineyard owner who pays workers very generously

Lk 15 compassionate father who welcomes son back

John 15 vinedresser who carefully prunes vines so they bear more fruit

SOPHIA

First nine chapters of Proverbs focus on Wisdom

Proverbs 4:13 she is your life, giver of life

Proverbs 8:35 whoever finds me finds life

Proverbs 8:15 decrees what is right

Proverbs 8: 22 – 31 like Wisdom herself, before the foundation of the earth I was there. Wisdom comes from God, was created by God

Wisdom 7:22 – 8:1 fashioner of all things; 21 attributes which is the product of two perfect numbers 3 & 7. Wisdom is perfection multiplied by perfection. Intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all powerful. Overseeing all, penetrating through all other intelligent spirits

Wisdom 8:1 orders all things

Wisdom 7: 24 pervades and penetrates all things

Wisdom 7:27 renews all things – renewable energy

Wisdom 9:10 shares the throne of God

Wisdom 7:10 – 14 source of all things new

Sirach 1:1 – 8 It is God who knows wisdom and pours her forth upon the world

Sirach 24: 1 – 27 Hymn of self praise sung by Wisdom in which she describes herself, her origins, her relationship to God and the good things she does for human beings. Her origins: she came from the mouth of God, she is God's word, breath, Spirit; as the spirit/wind that hovered over the waters of creation and as mist / steam that covered the earth at the beginning; she is universal, everywhere. Her image as a tree echoes Proverbs 8 – she strikes root among God's people. She feeds all who long for her. Her food is sweeter than honey. Her food is herself. All who eat of her will hunger still, who drink of her will thirst for more. One will never be able to get enough of what she offers. What she offers is life. Concludes her song with promise similar to Proverbs 8:35 – 34 – those who obey her will not be shamed. Those who serve her will not fall short.

Personification of God's wisdom as woman. Wisdom Woman is image of God. In speaking of her, speak of God. Biblical portrait of Wisdom consistently female.

GENDER FREE AND IMPERSONAL

Able to 1 Tim 1:12; Rom 4:21

All powerful God Ps 147:5

Almighty God Job 5:17

Anchor Heb 6:19

Author of life Acts 3:15

Awesome God Deut 7:21; Neh 1:5;

Beauty, Fragrance Song of Sol 5:16; PS 45:2; Is 33:17; Ps 27:4

Binder of wounds Ezek 34:16; Hos 6:1; Ps 147:3

Bird Ex 19:4; Deut 32:11 – 12; Lk 3:22

Bread John 6

Breath of God Job 27:3; 33:4; Is 30: 33; 40:7

Burden lifting God Ps 55:22; 81:6; Mt 11:28 - 30

Builder Psalm 127:1; Hebrews 3:4; 11:10

Ceaseless working Lam 3:22; Is 40:28

Champion Ps 41; 63: 1,2; Ps 45:3 – 5

Comfort of sufferers Ps 119:50; Is 51:12; 2 Thess 2:16

Comforter John 14:16 – 18; Is 66:13

Companion Is 41:10, 13; Micah 6:8

Compassion Lam 3:22, 23; Jer 31:20

Counselor Jn14:26; 15:26
Creator Gen 1, 2; Is 40:28; Rom 1:25; rev 4:11
Eagle Deut 32:11 eagle stirring up its nest
Enabler Phil 2:13
Eternal Ps 90:1,2
Eternal One Deut 33:27; Rom 16:26
Eternal Judge Gen 18:25; Is 33:22; Heb 12:23
Ever living God Ps 9:7
Ever loving God Ps 136
Exalted Eph 1:19 - 23
Fashioner Job 31:15; Ps119:73
Faithful 2 Thess 3:3
Faithful God 1 Cor 1:9; 10:13
Fire Hebrews 12; Acts 2:1 – 3; Ex3:1 - 12
First and Last Is 44:6; Rev 22:13
Fountain, water of life Jer 17¹³; Rev 21:6
Forgiveness Eph 1:7, 1
Friend John 15:14 – 15; Num 12:7; James 2:23
Generous Provider of all good gifts 1 Cor 2:12
Gentle Breeze I Kings 19
Gentleness Is 40:11
Giver of life Job 33:4
God of the covenant Gen 9: 17; Ezek 16:62; Lk 22:20
God of Israel Ex 5:1; 2 Sam 23:3; 2 Kings 10:31
God of peace Rom 15:33; 16:20; Phil 4:9
Good plan for my life Jer 29:11
Gracious giver of knowledge Prov 2:6; eccles 2:26; James 1:5
Gracious God Jonah 4:2
Great God of power Deut 7:1, 9:29,; Ps 66:3
Great God our hope Jer 12:8; Ps 71:5
Guardian 1 Peter 2:25
Guide Ps 73:23
Habitation, home, hiding place Psalm 90
Healer of sick Jer 30:17; Hos 11:3
Heart's delight Is 58:14; Ps 37:4
Helper of fatherless Ps 10:14
Helper of helpless Ps10:14
Helper of needy Ps 97:12
High and holy one Is 57:15
Holy Is 6:1 – 3; 57:15; Heb 7:26; 1Pet1:15 – 16
Holy One Lev 19:2; 1 Pet1:16
Holy Spirit John 16:13; Rom 8:2 – 17; Gal 5:16 – 25; Eph 4:30; 5:18; 1 Cor 6:19 - 20
Indwelling I Cor 6:19, 20
Intercessor Rom 8:34; Heb 2:17, 18, 4:14 –16, 7:25; I John 2:1
Just 2Chron 19:7; Is 11:3, 4
Keeper Ps 121:5; Is 27:3; Jude 14 2 Pet 1:3;
Keymaker Mt 16:19 giving keys; Rev 1:18 holding keys
Knitter Ps 139:13 who knit you together in your mother's womb
Knowledge Ps 139:1 – 6; Job 23:10
Liberator Is 49:9, 61:1; Lk 4:18 – 19
Life-giver Job 33:4; Ps 119:154 – 156; 1 Tim 6:13

Life John 11:25; 14:6
Light Ps 27:1; Is 60:20; John 1:5; 1 John 1:5; Ps 18:28 – 30; Luke 1:78 – 79; Is 9:2
Lion Rev 5:5
Logos John 1
Love Jer 31:3; John 17:23-26; Rom 5:5, 8; 1 John 3:1 – 2; 4:7 – 21
Maker of heaven and earth Gen 14:19 - 22
Mercy Lam 3:22, 23; Heb 8:12; Deut 4:31; Neh 9:31
Mighty God Deut 10:17; Is 9:6; Jer 32:18
Mighty Rock Ps 62:2; Ps 89:26
Most High or Most High God Gen 14:18; Deut 32:8; and in most psalms
Moth Hos 5:12, 14
Mountain Ps 121
Nourishment John 6:51, 57, 58
One who bears Is 46:4; Ex 19:4; Deut 33:27; Ps 55:22
One who cares for me 1Pet 5:7; Is 27:3; Ps 23; Deut 11:10 – 15
Our beginning and our end Rev. 1:8; 21:6, 22:13
Our refuge and our strength Ps 46:1; Ps 62:8
Owner of all Ps 50:10
Parent Hos 11:3; I John 5:1
Potter Jer 18: 1 – 6; Is 64:8
Powerful Jer 32:17; Ps 66:3; Mark 10:27; Eph 1:19 – 21
Power that saves Ps 67:2; Ps 78:22
Proclaimer of Justice Is 42 Mt 12:18
Promise keeper Num 23:19; Heb 6:12 – 20
Protector Ps 34:7; Ps 68:5
Provider Matt 6:25 – 34; Hos 2:8; Gen 22:14; Ps 111:5
Radiant Glorious God Ps 76:4
Reconciler Col 1:20; 2 Cor 5:18
Redeemer Job 19:25; Ps 19:14 Is 47:4, 60:16
Refreshment, rest Acts 3:19; Jer 31:25
Refuge Deut 33:27; Sam 22:33; Ps 31:2 Is 25:4; Ps 57:2 Prov 14:26
Righteous God Ps 71:19; Ps 112:4; Dan 9:14; Is 45:21; 1 John 2:1
Rewarder I Cor 3:14
Rock Gen 49:24; Deut 32:15; 2 Sam 22:2 - 3
Ruler Is 33:22
Satisfier Ps 145:16, 19
Security Is 33:6
Searcher of hearts Ps 139:1; 1Chron 28:9; Rom 8:27; Rev. 2:23
Shelter form the storm Is 25:4
Sheltering wings Ps 36
Shield Gen 15:1; 2 Sam 22:31; Ps 18:30; Ps 28:7
Song Ex 15:2
Sovereign, Sovereign God 1 Tim 6:15; Ps 115:3; Ps 135:5 – 6; Is 46:9 – 11; Dan 4:35 – 37; Eph 1:11; 1 Tim 6:15
Spirit Mk 1L10; John 4:24
Spirit of God Gen 1:2; Ex 31:3; Lk 4:18; Mt 3:16
Stability, security Is 33:6; Ps 125:1; Acts 20:24; Prov 1:33 Ps 112:6 – 8
Strength Is 49:5; Is 40:29 – 31; Is 45: 24; Ps 71:16; Dan 11:32, Eph 6:10
Suffering 2 Cor 3:5
Sufficiency 2 Cor 3:5; 9:8; 12:9
Sustainer Ps 55:2; I Cor 1:8

Sympathy Is 63:9

Teacher Ps 25:8, 9; Is 30:

Thunder Ex 19

Unchangeable Heb 13:8; Ps 102:26 – 27; Job 23:13; Num 23:19

Victor Col 2:15

Water Ps 42 Is 32:15 - 18; Ez 36:25 – 26; Joel 2:28 – 29; John 4:7 - 15

Watchful and caring Gen 31:49 – 50; Jer 1:12

Way Jn 14:6

Wonderful Conselor Is9:6

Worthy Rev 5:12

Wise God Rom 16:2