

## Biblical Diversity (in God Language)

The Bible's inclusion of so many figures for God is both an **invitation and a caution**. The invitation is to discovery: discovery of who God is, and what our friendship with God might become. **The caution is against assuming that any one image of God, whatever truth it holds, adequately describes God.**

from [Why are there Metaphors in the Bible? How do I Interpret Them? \(awkningschooloftheology.com\)](http://awkningschooloftheology.com)

<sup>13</sup> But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" <sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM.**"<sup>a</sup> He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Exodus 3:13-14

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb. uncertain; variously translated: "I Am That I Am"; "I Am Who I Am"; "I Will Be What I Will Be"; etc. Exodus 3:14

<sup>18</sup> **Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray."** <sup>19</sup> And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." <sup>20</sup> But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for **no one shall see me and live.**" <sup>21</sup> And the LORD continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; <sup>22</sup> and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; <sup>23</sup> then I will take away my hand, and **you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.**" Exodus 33:18-23

<sup>1</sup> Then God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; <sup>3</sup> **you shall have no other gods before me.**

<sup>4</sup> **You shall not make for yourself an idol**, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for **I the LORD your God am a jealous God**, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. Exodus 20:1-6

## Metaphors of God in the Psalms

1. A Shield Around Me	Psalms 3:3; 7:10; 18:2, 30; 84:11; 119:114; 142:5
2. My Glory	Psalms 3:3
3. My King and My God	Psalms 5:2; 8:1; 24:7; 145:1; 149:2
4. My Shield*	Psalms 7:10
5. Righteous Judge	Psalms 7:11
6. The Most High	Psalms 7:17
7. Stronghold	Psalms 9:9; 18:2; 144:2
8. Refuge	Psalms 14:6; 28:8; 31:2; 57:16; 71:7; 142:5
9. My Chosen Portion	Psalms 16:5; 119:57; 142:5
10. My Cup	Psalms 16:5
11. Savior	Psalms 17:7
12. My Strength	Psalms 18:1; (28:8); 89:17
13. My Rock	Psalms 18:2, 31, 46; 19:14; (31:2); 62:7; 144:1-2

14. My Fortress	Psalm 18:2; 144:2
15. My Deliverer	Psalm 18:2; 140:7; 144:2
16. My Rock in Whom I take Refuge*	Psalm 18:2
17. My Shield*	Psalm 18:2
18. The Horn of my Salvation	Psalm 18:2
19. My Stronghold	Psalm 18:2; 27:1
20. A Shield for all Who Take Refuge in You	Psalm 18:30
21. A Rock*	Psalm 18:31
22. My Rock*	Psalm 18:46
23. My Rock* and My Redeemer	Psalm 19:14
24. My Shepherd	Psalm 23:1
25. The King* of Glory	Psalm 24:7*
26. My Light	Psalm 27:1
27. My Salvation	Psalm 27:1
28. The Stronghold* of My Life	Psalm 27:1
29. The Strength* of Your People	Psalm 28:8
30. The Saving Refuge* of Your Anointed	Psalm 28:8
31. My Helper	Psalm 30:10
32. A Rock of Refuge	Psalm 31:2-3*
33. A Strong Fortress to Save Me	Psalm 32:2-3
34. A Hiding Place for Me	Psalm 32:7; 119:114
35. My Help	Psalm 40:17
36. Our Guide Forever	Psalm 48:14
37. Upholder of My Life	Psalm 54:4
38. Refuge in the Shadow of Your Wings	Psalm 57:16*
39. Mighty Rock	Psalm 62:7*
40. The Hope of All the Ends of the Earth	Psalm 65:5; 71:5
41. Father of Orphans	Psalm 68:5
42. Protector of Widows	Psalm 68:5
43. My Hope	Psalm 71:5*
44. My Trust	Psalm 71:5
45. My Strong Refuge	Psalm 71:7*
46. The Holy One of Israel	Psalm 71:22
47. The Most High	Psalm 73:11
48. Sun and Shield*	Psalm 84:11
49. The Glory of the Righteous	Psalm 89:17
50. Strength	Psalm 89:17*
51. Dwelling Place	Psalm 90:1; 91:9
52. Lover of Justice	Psalm 99:4
53. My Portion	Psalm 119:57*
54. My Hiding Place	Psalm 119:114*
55. My Shield	Psalm 119:114*
56. Your Keeper	Psalm 121:5
57. Your Shade at Your Right Hand	Psalm 121:5

58. You Who are Enthroned in the Heavens	Psalm 123:1
59. Maker of Heaven and Earth	Psalm 134:3; 149:2
60. My Strong Deliverer	Psalm 140:7*
61. My Refuge	Psalm 142:5*
62. My Portion in the Land of the Living	Psalm 142:5*
63. My Rock	Psalm 144:1-2*
64. My Fortress	Psalm 144:2*
65. My Stronghold	Psalm 144:2*
66. My Deliverer	Psalm 144:2*
67. My Shield in Whom I take Refuge	Psalm 144:2*
68. My God and King	Psalm 145:1*
69. Maker	Psalm 149:2*
70. King	Psalm 149:2*

### God as Father

<sup>6</sup> Do you thus repay the LORD,  
O foolish and senseless people?  
**Is not he your father, who created you,**  
who made you and established you? Deuteronomy 32:6

<sup>16</sup> **For you are our father,**  
though Abraham does not know us  
and Israel does not acknowledge us;  
you, O LORD, are our father;  
our Redeemer from of old is your name. Isaiah 63:16

<sup>41</sup> **You are indeed doing what your father does.”** They said to him, “We are not illegitimate children; **we have one father, God himself.”** John 8:41

<sup>19</sup> Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, **the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.** John 5:19

<sup>30</sup> “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because **I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.** John 5:30

<sup>14</sup> For **all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.** <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of **adoption.** When we cry, “**Abba! Father!**” <sup>16</sup> it is that very **Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God,** <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8:14-17

## I Am Sayings of Jesus

<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, **“I am the bread of life.** Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35, 48

<sup>41</sup> Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, **“I am the bread that came down from heaven.”** John 6:41

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread,<sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, **“This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”** 1 Corinthians 11:23-24

<sup>12</sup> Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, **“I am the light of the world.** Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

<sup>7</sup> So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, **I am the gate for the sheep.** <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> **I am the gate.** Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

<sup>11</sup> **“I am the good shepherd.** The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. John 10:7-11

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, **“I am the resurrection and the life.** Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. John 11:25-26

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

<sup>1</sup> **“I am the true vine,** and my Father is the vinegrower. <sup>2</sup> He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. John 15:1-2\

## God is Light

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,<sup>2</sup> the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.<sup>3</sup> **Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.** <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. Genesis 1:1-5

<sup>14</sup> And God said, **“Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night;** and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,<sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup> God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth,<sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, **the fourth day.** Genesis 1:14-19

<sup>1</sup> **The LORD is my light and my salvation;**  
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid? Psalms 27:1

<sup>11</sup> For **the LORD God is a sun and shield;**  
he bestows favor and honor.  
No good thing does the LORD withhold  
from those who walk uprightly. Psalms 84:11

<sup>19</sup> The sun shall no longer be  
your light by day,  
nor for brightness shall the moon  
give light to you by night;  
**but the LORD will be your everlasting light,**  
and your God will be your glory. Isaiah 60:19

<sup>2</sup> But for you who revere my name **the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.** You  
shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. Malachi 4:2

What has come into being<sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.<sup>5</sup> **The light shines in  
the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.** John 1:3-5

<sup>9</sup> **The true light,** which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. John 1:9

<sup>12</sup> Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, **"I am the light of the world.** Whoever follows me will never walk in  
darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12

<sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, **I am the light of the world."** John 9:5

<sup>36</sup> While you have the light, **believe in the light, so that you may become children of light."**  
After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them. John 12:36

<sup>16</sup> It is he alone who has immortality and **dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or  
can see;** to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:16

<sup>17</sup> Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the **Father of  
lights,** with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. James 1:17

<sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that **God is light** and in him there is  
no darkness at all. 1 John 1:5

<sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for **the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is  
the Lamb.** Revelation 21:23

<sup>5</sup> And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for **the Lord God will be their light,**  
and they will reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:5

## God is Love

Whoever does not love does not know God, for **God is love**. 1 John 4:8

<sup>12</sup> **No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us**, and his love is perfected in us.

<sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. <sup>16</sup> So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. **God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God**, and God abides in them. 1 John 4:12-16

### 1 Corinthians 13 as a description of God/Love

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

## God is Wind/Breath

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup> the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while **a wind from God swept over the face of the waters**. <sup>3</sup> Then **God said**, "Let there be light"; and there was light. Genesis 1:1-3

<sup>11</sup> Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. <sup>12</sup> It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" <sup>13</sup> Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" <sup>14</sup> No, the word is very near to you; **it is in your mouth and in your heart** for you to observe. Deuteronomy 30:11-14

<sup>4</sup> The spirit of God has made me,  
and **the breath of the Almighty gives me life**. Job 33:4

<sup>6</sup> By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
and all their host **by the breath of his mouth**. Psalms 33:6

<sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> **Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.** <sup>6</sup> I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD." Ezekiel 37:4-6

<sup>8</sup> **The wind blows where it chooses**, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." <sup>22</sup> When he had said this, **he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.** <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." John 20:21-23

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly from heaven **there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind**, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> **All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Acts 2:1-4

### **God is Fire**

<sup>24</sup> For **the LORD your God is a devouring fire**, a jealous God. Deuteronomy 4:24

<sup>3</sup> Know then today that **the LORD your God is the one who crosses over before you as a devouring fire**; he will defeat them and subdue them before you, so that you may dispossess and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has promised you. Deuteronomy 9:3

<sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; <sup>29</sup> for indeed **our God is a consuming fire**. Hebrews 12:28-29

### **God is Potter**

<sup>8</sup> Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and **you are our potter**; we are all the work of your hand. Isaiah 64:8

### **Feminine Metaphors for God**

#### **Genesis 1:27 Women and Men created in God's image**

"Humankind was created as God's reflection: in the divine image God created them; female and male, God made them."

#### **Hosea 11:3-4 God described as a mother**

God: "Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I who took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them."

#### **Hosea 13:8 God described as a mother bear**

"Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and tear them asunder..."

#### **Deuteronomy 32:11-12 God described as a mother eagle**

"Like the eagle that stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young, God spreads wings to catch you, and carries you on pinions."

#### **Deuteronomy 32:18 God who gives birth**

"You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you; you forgot the God who gave you birth."

**Isaiah 66:13 God as a comforting mother**

God: "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

**Isaiah 49:15 God compared to a nursing mother**

God: "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you."

**Isaiah 42:14 God as a woman in labor**

God: "For a long time I have held my peace, I have kept myself still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor, I will gasp and pant."

**Psalms 131:2 God as a Mother**

"But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me."

**Psalms 123:2-3 God compared to a woman**

"As the eyes of a servant look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to you, YHWH, until you show us your mercy!"

**Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34 God as a Mother Hen**

Jesus: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

**Luke 15:8-10 God as woman looking for her lost coin**

Jesus: "Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

*Compiled by the [Women's Ordination Conference](#)*