

*[God says,] “As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.” (Isa. 66:13)*

The book The Shack by William Young was a powerful metaphorical explanation of the Trinity. And was a best-seller to boot. In it, a man meets the Three Persons of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I’ve already written about his portrayal of the Holy Spirit as Sarayu, but today I want to look at his portrayal of God the Father. Because God wasn’t a Father but a Mother. His portrayal of God as a black woman brought some new depth to God’s characteristics than the usual bearded white man. And though this caused no end of controversy and complaint from the evangelical camp, it opened a door to a broader view of our loving God.

We all have different images that come to mind when we mention, “Mother”. For some of us, our mothers were the ideal of a nurturing, caring, supportive mom. For some, our mothers were uninterested, absent, or even abusive. This is the reason pastors across America are very careful about the language they use if they celebrate Mother’s Day in their churches. But this is the case with our various notions of “Father” as well, and so Father’s Day is also ripe for misrepresentation. But when we use these terms for God, who is neither male nor female because He is beyond both, we have to think of the ideal of each.

So what does it mean to think of God as a mother? The imagery for this metaphor is all through scripture, from the Psalms to the Prophets to Jesus Himself. Yet we would cringe if we were ever to hear the phrase “Mother God” spoken in a worship service. Why? In the immortal words of Tevya from *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tradition!

Yet God is a nurturer, the ultimate nurturer in fact. All of our nourishment comes from God, whether physical or spiritual. God is a comforter, a trait we use freely at funeral time but seldom beyond it. God is a care-taker, watching over His people and caring for us all the time. And of course we cannot forget the “Momma Bear” image of the defender, an image God embodies so well.

So whatever your mother was like, as you ponder God the Mother, I challenge you to think of the motherly traits God has and give Him thanks for them. And then wonder how you might embody those traits to others around you.

Questions to consider:

What traits come to mind when you think of your own mother? Take a moment to thank or forgive her for them.

What traits come to mind when you think of the ideal mother?

How has God showed this side, this face, to you in your life?

How might you embody those traits to those in your family, friend circles, and church this week?