

Forgotten Pictures of God - God as Nurturer

Understanding God's Revelation Throughout Scripture

Three Key Approaches to Scripture Study:

1. **Ontology** - What God _____:

- God's **essential** nature and **being** attributes
- The fundamental qualities that define God's **existence** and **character**

2. **Manifestation** - How God _____ Himself:

- Through God's **actions**, **appearances**, and interventions
- In human **story** and **experience**

3. **Metaphor** - How Scripture _____ God:

- Using **human** language and imagery
- Making the divine **accessible** to our understanding

Applying Scripture: Three Essential Approaches

1. _____

- Directly **repeating** specific biblical commands or actions
- Suitable for **explicit** divine instructions
- Requires discernment for **culturally** or culturally specific contexts

2. _____

- Extracting **timeless** moral, theological, or ethical principles
- Seeks the **enduring** truth
- Allows application across diverse **times** and **cultures**

3. _____

- Discerning the **progressive** movement and development of biblical themes
 - Understanding where God is **leading** His people
 - Seeing how revelation **unfolds**
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The Heart of a Father

God as Father: Carrying and Compassionate

Key Verses:

- **Deuteronomy 32:6** - "God carries us as a **father** carries his son"
 - Image of carrying suggests: **intimate care**, protection during **vulnerability**, willingness to bear **our burdens**
- **Psalms 103:13** - "As a father shows **compassion** to his children, so the Lord shows **compassion**"
 - Divine compassion mirrors the **tender** mercy of an earthly father
 - Understanding our **frailties** and responding with **kindness**
- **Hosea 11:3** - "Yet it is I who taught **Ephraim** to walk, I who took them in my **arms**"
 - God pictured as a father who is **engaged** and loving
 - Experiencing the **frustration** of a wayward son

The Shaping Father: Molding with Purpose

Three Aspects of Divine Fatherhood:

1. **Divine Molding** (Isaiah 64:8)
 - God molds us as a **father** shapes his children
 - Working with **patient** hands to form **character**
2. **Expecting Honor** (Malachi 1:6)
 - God expects **honor** from His children
 - Establishing the relationship's **reciprocal** nature
3. **Adoption & Inheritance** (John 1:12; Galatians 4:4-7)
 - God **adopts** children and grants them an **inheritance**
 - Securing their **eternal** future

The Providing Father: Source of Life's Necessities

Two Key Areas:

Prayer (Matthew 6:9) - "Our Father"

- Reveals God as the source of our **provision** and **guidance**
- Acknowledging **dependence** on One who delights in meeting our needs

Provision (Matthew 6:26) - "Your heavenly Father feeds the birds"

- Establishes the **hierarchy** of God's care
- If He provides for **birds**, how much more for His **children**?

The Disciplining Father

Loving Discipline (Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:4-11)

- God disciplines His children as a **relational** privilege
 - Not as paternal **oppression** but for **restoration** and development
 - Restoring and developing them into His **image**
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The Tender Mother

God Nurtures as a Mother: Birth and Remembrance

Key Scriptures:

- **Deuteronomy 32:11-12, 18** - Israel "forgot the God who **gave** you birth"
 - Using language of **childbirth** to describe God's creative relationship
- **Isaiah 42:14** - "God is attentive like a woman in **labor**"
 - Depicting God's **intense** focus and commitment during critical moments
- **Isaiah 49:15** - "Even if a mother forgets, God will not **forget** you"
 - Divine love **exceeds** even the strongest human maternal bond

Divine Maternal Comfort and Protection

Two Key Promises:

Isaiah 66:13 - "As a mother **comforts** her child, so I will comfort you"

- God's responsive **tenderness** in times of distress
- The kind of **intimate** comfort only a mother's love provides

Matthew 23:37 - Jesus laments over Jerusalem with maternal imagery

- Reveals God's heart to **care**, gather, protect
 - While also allowing the **freedom** to reject such love
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The Good Shepherd

Characteristics of False Shepherds

Four Biblical Examples:

1. **Ezekiel 34:1-10** - False shepherds **feast** on the people God sent them to feed
2. **Jeremiah 23:9-40** - Prophets who **lead** God's people astray
3. **Malachi 2** - Priests who chose not to **honor** God's name

4. **Deuteronomy 13:1-3** - False shepherds lead after **foreign** gods and practices

God as Shepherd: Guiding and Sacrificing

Two Key Aspects:

1. **Psalm 23:1-3** - "The Lord is my shepherd... he **restores** my soul"
 - Providing **rest**, guidance, and spiritual renewal
 - In **green** pastures and beside still **waters**
 2. **John 10:11** - "I am the Good Shepherd; I **lay down** my life for the sheep"
 - Ultimate shepherding involves **ultimate** sacrifice
 - Giving one's **life** for the protection of the flock
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God as Divine Provider

Meeting Every Need

Three Dimensions of Provision:

1. **Wilderness Provision** (Exodus 16:4)
 - God gave **manna** in the wilderness
 - Demonstrating daily **faithfulness** and reliability of divine provision
 2. **Daily Bread** (Matthew 6:11)
 - "Give us this day our **daily bread**"
 - Teaching dependence on God for **everyday** sustenance
 3. **Complete Supply** (Philippians 4:19)
 - "God will **supply** every need in Christ"
 - Promising **comprehensive** provision through divine resources and love
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Divine Healer

God as Healer and Comforter

Three Aspects of Divine Healing:

1. **Divine Physician** (Exodus 15:26)
 - "I am the LORD, your **healer**"
 - Establishing God's identity as the ultimate source of **healing** and restoration
2. **Heart Healer** (Psalm 147:3)
 - "He heals the **brokenhearted** and binds wounds"
 - Ministry to **emotional** and spiritual injuries
3. **God of Comfort** (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

- "God of all **comfort**, who comforts us"
 - Divine **empathy** and ministry of consolation in times of trouble
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God as Teacher

God as Teacher and Discipliner

Key Scripture References:

- Isaiah 2:3; 48:17; 54:13
- Job 36:22
- Psalm 25:8-9, 12; 32:8
- Jeremiah 32:30-35
- 1 Thessalonians 4:9

God teaches through:

- Through **Moses**: Deuteronomy 4:5; 31:19
 - Through His **Word**: Psalm 119:105
 - Through **Jesus**: John 12:49; 13:13; Mark 6:34
 - Through the **Holy Spirit**: Nehemiah 9:20; John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:13
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The Great Sustainer

God as Sustainer: The Source of All Being

Three Key Truths:

1. **Acts 17:28** - "In Him we **live**, and move, and have our being"
 - Expressing our complete **dependence** on God for existence itself
 2. **Colossians 1:17** - "In Him all things **hold together**"
 - Revealing God as the force that **maintains** the coherence of all creation
 3. **John 15:5** - "I am the **vine**; you are the branches"
 - Illustrating our vital **connection** to God as the source of spiritual life
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Christ the Nurturer

Christ as Nurturer of His Church

Three Aspects:

1. **Ephesians 5:29** - "Christ **nourishes** and cherishes the church"
 - Using language of **tender** care and devoted attention
 2. **John 14:18** - "I will not leave you as **orphans**"
 - Promising **permanent** presence and care
 3. **Revelation 22:12-14** - Christ **guides** and rewards the church
 - Providing both direction for the **present** and hope for the future
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Implications for Ministry

Local Church Ministry

Three Key Areas:

1. **Holistic Care**
 - Ministry must address **physical**, emotional, and spiritual needs
 - Reflecting God's **comprehensive** concern for human well-being
2. **Patient Growth**
 - Like God's patient **molding**, church ministry should allow for gradual spiritual development
 - Rather than demanding **instant** maturity
3. **Sacrificial Service**
 - Following Christ's example, church ministry involves **laying down** one's life for others' spiritual benefit

Ministry Leadership

Shepherding with God's Heart:

- Provide **comfort** in times of distress and uncertainty
- Offer **guidance** that respects individual calling and timing
- Create environments for spiritual **growth** and development
- Correct with **clarity** and fatherly expectations
- Balance correction with **encouragement** and support
- Model **sacrificial** love in leadership decisions

The Fatherly Role

Three Key Areas:

1. **Emotional Availability**
 - Like God's **compassionate** response to His children
 - Fathers should be emotionally **present** and responsive
2. **Sacrificial Provision**
 - Following God's model of provision
 - Providing not just **material** needs but emotional security and spiritual guidance

3. **Loving Discipline**

- Discipline flows from **love** and aims at character development
- Not mere **compliance** or control over behavior

The Motherly Role

Four Key Aspects:

1. **Protective Love**

- Like God's desire to **gather** and protect
- Mothers provide **security** and shelter from life's storms

2. **Healing Touch**

- Reflecting God's ministry to the **brokenhearted**
- Mothers offer **comfort** and healing in times of pain

3. **Unforgetting Love**

- Even exceeding natural maternal bonds
- Drawing from God's promise never to **forget** His children

4. **Creative Sacrifice**

- Like God's labor in bringing forth His people
- Motherhood involves **creative** sacrifice for new life and growth

For Children and Parents

For Children:

- **Honor** parents as reflections of divine authority
- Understand **discipline** as expression of love
- Appreciate the **sacrifice** involved in parental care
- Recognize their inherent **worth** as God's children

For Parents:

- **Model** God's patient, nurturing character
- Discipline with **love and clarity**
- Provide both **guidance** and an environment to grow
- Reflect **God's** nurturing in daily interactions

Living in Light of God's Nurturing Love

Three Essential Responses:

1. **Receive**

- Accept God's nurturing love with **open hearts**
- Allow God's care to **heal** past wounds and provide security

2. **Reflect**

- Mirror God's nurturing character in our **relationships**
 - Offer the same **balanced** care we have received
 - 3. **Reproduce**
 - Create **environments** where others can experience God's nurture
 - Through human **community** and care
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Personal Reflection Questions

1. Which aspect of God's nurturing character do you most need to experience right now?
2. How has your understanding of earthly parents affected your view of God as Father/Mother?
3. In what ways can you better reflect God's nurturing character in your relationships?
4. What areas of your life need God's healing and comfort today?
5. How might understanding God as nurturer change how you approach ministry or parenting?