



Is God a male, female, both, or neither?

God is *neither* male nor female! Unlike the Canaanite deities from Old Testament days, and unlike certain Hindu, tribal, or ancestral deities that modern people worship, God is *above* gender. Christians do not believe that God is “an old man with a beard and ten fingers and ten toes.” Absolutely not! Neither does God consist of female body parts. Absolutely not! In John 4:24, Jesus made it clear when he explained, “*God is Spirit.*” When the Word became flesh, Jesus was certainly male. However, the eternal, Triune God is *neither* male nor female.

Key Term
Αββα Daddy, Papa

Why did Jesus call God “Abba”?

Jesus called God “Abba” (Father, Papa, Dad) to demonstrate the close, loving, family relationship God wanted to share with people. When Jesus came, the Jewish people revered the name of God so much that they would not write or even speak God’s name. The Jewish rabbis did *not* teach that God was approachable and near. What a contrast from the God who walked and talked with people in the garden of Genesis 2! By calling God “Abba,” Jesus did not seek to reveal God as masculine. Rather, he wanted people to know that God was close, loving, and relational.

Scripture describes God in both male and female terms because these are the metaphors and analogies that people understand. In Deuteronomy 32:18 notice God’s male and female actions. “*You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth.*” While, God is *above* gender, the best traits of men/women reflect God!

Verses referring to God in masculine terms:

- Psalm 89:26 “*He will call out to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Savior.’*”
- Isaiah 63:16 “*You are our Father...you, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.*”

Verses referring to God in feminine terms:

- Isaiah 66:13 “*As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.*”
- Matthew 23:37 “*How often have I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.*”

Should we call God “Mother”?

While we do not personally refer to God as Mother, we don’t believe that God is “offended” by this. After all, the best qualities of dads and moms are reflections of God’s character. Also, when people call God “Father” he does not change and become *more male*; and if people call God “Mother,” again, he does not change and become *more female*. God remains spirit... *above* gender! Notice that in the examples above, God is directly called *Father* as a noun, but he is described as a *mother* through similes (“like” or “as”). While we understand that God is neither male nor female, we should respect the way Jesus chose to refer to God... as Father. Can you imagine Jesus saying, “the Father and I are one?” then later teaching the disciples to pray, “Our Mother, which art in heaven...”? That would certainly be confusing! Remember Jesus was also limited by language.

Conclusion

God wants to walk with people, to fellowship, to share our close and personal concerns. God used language to reveal himself, but language falls far short of conveying the power and love of God. Jesus demonstrated that although God is holy and set apart, God is also personal and near. Let us rejoice!

4 Crucial Questions
1. What does this teach us about GOD ?
2. What does this teach us about PEOPLE ?
3. What command should I OBEY ?
4. With whom can I SHARE this?