

God is not my father

By [Chris Brundage](#)

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Midway through Sunday worship, I realized my sermon didn't fit with Father's Day. I had a Father's Day prayer to use during the pastoral prayer, but it felt perfunctory to read the words. Truth is, Father's Day just isn't on my radar. I am a 50-year-old man who has never been a father, and my own father died over 30 years ago. It makes me smile to think of the good man who was my father, but that was a long time ago. Fathers and fathering are remote to my daily life now.

The idea of *God* as Father is remote to my life too. Jesus taught me to call God Father. God as Father is woven into Christian theology and liturgy. But the notion itself does not touch my heart. Neither does God as Mother, the alternative people put forth. Any parental image for God does little for my faith. It feels like I am missing something important here, but this is where I am. God is not my Father.

Frances Irene Taber said of the early Quakers, "They saw that all they did must flow directly from what they experienced as true, and that if it did not, both the knowing and the doing became false." It is not that I am the center of things, and theology must arrange itself to make me happy, but theology has to speak to my condition, and God as Father (or Mother) does not accord with what I experience as true. Laying stress on it has come to feel false.

By contrast, I love using images for God taken from my daily practice of walking. God as the ground that my feet walk on. God as the air that fills my lungs with life. God as the trees that shelter me in their strong, silent presence. These are images for God that speak to my experience now. I am not a pantheist or a panentheist. The creation is not the Creator. But the creation points my eyes to the Creator and gives me pictures and names to use in relating to the Creator.

I will continue to call God Father in my public faith as pastor, but in my private faith as a person on pilgrimage toward God, I have learned to see God in other ways.

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