Giving Up The Old Guy in the Sky

Two Central Questions

1. Is God male? God, as spirit, transcends biological categories.
God does not possess a body or biological sex.

2. Why do we call God "Father" (still)?

Jesus consistently addressed God as Father.
The metaphor is deeply biblical and central to Christian prayer.
Yet father-language carries tension:
For some it evokes: Protection; Safety; Belonging
For others it may evoke: Absence; Fear; Control; Hierarchy
Mary Daly (a feminist Theologian) once wrote:

"If God is male, then the male is God."

If God is consistently imagined as male, maleness can subtly acquire divine authority.

The Old Testament Witness

First explicit reference to God as Father appears in **Deuteronomy 32:6**. In total there are only about 16 explicit references to God as Father in the Old Testament (OT).
The OT also includes maternal imagery – **Isaiah 66:13.**
Biblical language about God is symbolic and relational, not biological.

The New Testament Development

In the New Testament, "Father" appears roughly **205 times.**
Jesus prays "Abba," expressing intimacy and trust.
The father metaphor becomes central but it remains metaphorical language. It expresses relationship, not biology.

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Discussion Round:

1) Do these reflections challenge you? Was there anything new for you? Has anything in your image of God shifted as a result?
2) What difference does it make to speak of God as Mother or as Father?
3) If Jesus were to return, could you imagine him being born as a woman? What would speak in favor of that? What would speak against it?

The World Jesus entered

The ancient world was deeply patriarchal:

- Men controlled legal, religious, and social life.
- Women belonged to fathers, then husbands.
- Women could not testify, teach publicly, or initiate divorce.
- Female bodies were often labeled "unclean."

Even biblical texts reflect these structures.
The question is not whether patriarchy existed.
It did. The question is: **How does Jesus respond to it?**

Jesus Breaks the Pattern

Jesus consistently treats women as full persons. He does not reinforce hierarchy. He practices dignity,

Three Key Biblical Examples

1. ***The bleeding woman (Mark 5):*** Twelve years "unclean."
Excluded from worship and community.
Jesus allows her to touch him. He calls her "daughter."
Holiness becomes closeness, not separation.
Dignity replaces exclusion.
2. Mary and Martha (Luke 10): Mary "sits at Jesus' feet"; the posture of a disciple. Women were not permitted to study Torah.
Jesus defends her. Faith is not male territory.
Learning and theology are open to women.
3. Divorce (mark 10): In Jesus' time, only men could divorce.
A dismissed woman often lost protection and survival.
Jesus exposes this as hardness of heart not God's original will.
Marriage becomes mutual responsibility, not male control.

Genesis Reconsidered

Genesis 3: "He shall rule over you" is better translated with "He **will** rule over you."
Domination is not God's command**. It is a result of sin.**
Redemption means undoing distortion.

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Further Reading:

(a.k.a. the books your pastor keeps recommending)

- "Woman and the gender of God" by Amy Peeler
- "God Beyond Gender: Feminist Christian God-Language" by Gail Ramshaw