

# God's Love For Us

## The Mother Hen

Jesus used images from nature to share the meaning of God's love. People who lived on earth in Jesus' time could have watched a mother hen sit patiently keeping her eggs warm for twenty-one days while she waited for the chicks to hatch. Then, with great love, she spread her wings and called her chicks to come for warmth and protection. Jesus told his listeners that this was the kind of love he had for them. See his words in Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34. Watch the video "O Spread Your Wings Above Me" to observe a mother hen caring for her chicks.

Today Jesus calls us and keeps us in his care.



Painting by Walter Kuse

## Think About These Bible Verses

### God's Love and Protection

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!  
Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34

### Protection Under Wings

Guard me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of your **wings**,  
Psalm 17:8

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your **wings**. Psalm 36:7

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your **wings** I will take refuge, until the destroying storms pass by.  
Psalm 57:1

Let me abide in your tent forever, find refuge under the shelter of your **wings**.  
*Selah* Psalm 61:4

My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your **wings** I sing for joy.  
Psalm 63:5-7

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence, he will cover you with his pinions, and under his **wings** you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.  
Psalm 91:1-4

### **Strength Given by God**

He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall **mount up with wings like eagles**, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:29-31

But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its **wings**. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. Malachi 4:2

### **God Carries Us in Difficult Times**

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on **eagles' wings** and brought you to myself. Exodus 19:4

The LORD'S own portion was his people, Jacob his allotted share. He sustained him in a desert land, in a howling wilderness waste; he shielded him, cared for him, guarded him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest and hovers over its young; as it **spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions**, the LORD alone guided him; no foreign god was with him.  
Deuteronomy 32:9-12

### **Think About These Hymns**

#### **Holy Wings**

Lina Sandell wrote the first portion of the hymn entitled "Holy Wings" in 1860. She had experienced many tragedies in her young life. The tune is an old Swedish folk melody. It first appeared in a hymnal in 1889. Gracia Grindal translated "Holy Wings" and wrote the second verse for her nephew's baptism in 1986.

## **Lord Jesus Who Dost Love Me, O Spread Your Wings Above Me (Breit aus die Flügel beide)**

Paul Gerhardt wrote the German words for “Lord Jesus Who Dost Love Me” in about 1690. Listen to it in the video. He wanted words for an evening song that could be played on the church bells in the village where he was a pastor. For the next several centuries, German parents used the hymn as a bedtime song, assuring their children of Jesus’ love. It was also used after the baptism of a baby, commending the little one to God’s care and protection.

### **On Eagle’s Wings**

Michael Joncas, a Catholic Priest, composed “On Eagles’ Wings” in 1979. The words are based on ideas found in Psalm 91 and Isaiah 40:31.

### **More Things to Think About and Do**

#### **Pray**

Dear Heavenly Father,  
Thank you for calling us and caring for us. Thank you for sheltering us under your wings. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

- Watch a mother hen and chicks on a farm.
- How does the mother hen teach baby chicks about finding food?
- What sounds do clucks (broody mother hens) and chicks make? What sounds do hens make when they are not broody?
- Think of words that would describe a mother hen and chicks. How could you use those words in a poem or in a hymn of praise?
- Use a computer search engine to find information about broody hens and baby chicks.

(Bible Verses from the New Revised Standard Version)

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