

# To Know Him By Name



*An Intimate Look at the Names of God*

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# A Note From the Authors



“...My people will know my name...”

Isaiah 52:6

*To Know Him By Name* is a result of an honest desire to know our God better, who He really is, and how He works in our lives. It is our hope and prayer that through this study your understanding of your Maker, your Savior, and your King will expand beyond its current boundaries and you will develop a deeper level of intimacy with the Lover of your soul. He is, you will find, an incredibly complex personality with emotions, plans, and a longing to be loved by His people. This book is far from exhaustive; in fact, we admittedly have barely scratched the surface. Some of the names of God traditionally presented in such a study have been omitted, while others more obscure have been explored. Regardless, we have found that as our knowledge of Him is diligently cultivated through study, our love for Him flourishes and our desire to serve Him overflows from a grateful heart. Get to know Him better...you won't regret it!

In His Name,

Janet & Kristin

# How to Use This Study



*To Know Him By Name* is a study for both individual and small group use. Based largely in the Old Testament, it is rooted in much Biblical history. Woven throughout, however, is practical application pulled from the pages of the New Testament and the words of Jesus Himself. Each chapter of study is divided into five sections. The first three are designed as a day's worth of personal study to introduce a particular name of God and exploring the context in which the name was revealed. This encourages digging into the spiritual principles found in the revelation of each name, some often hiding in plain sight. The fourth day of study links the name studied in that chapter to a particular psalm. Taking the time to journal through a psalm is well worth the effort and will hopefully provoke meditation and reflection with thoughts and prayers recorded in a separate journal. The intention of time spent journaling through a psalm is to be immersed in a time of praise and worship centered on the character of our God. Finally, the last section of each chapter is a set of small group questions that recap the week of homework, hitting the

highlights and encouraging discussion. These questions can be answered ahead of time or be explored together in a small group format. However you choose to use this study, may you be blessed and enriched as you seek to know your God better!

# To Know Him By Name

*“The name of the LORD is a strong tower;  
the righteous runs into it and is safe.”*

Proverbs 18:10



## DAY ONE: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

“What’s in a name?” These words penned by William Shakespeare in the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* present a compelling question. What is in a name? According to the playwright, not much. His famous character, Juliet Capulet, goes on to say:

*“That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”*

In this line, Juliet tells Romeo his name means nothing. She loves Romeo the person, not his name, or his family’s name. Shakespeare has his point, but history disagrees. In times past, names meant something. In the ancient world, the whole process of naming someone or something was important and the giving of a name was especially significant. For many people, this is still true today. We often pass down family names in various forms, and many times a new bride takes her husband’s name to identify with him and their new life together. In ancient times a name often indicated a certain character or temperament. Sometimes it identified a dominant quality or personality trait.

Throughout Scripture God changed people’s names to emphasize a particular aspect of their character. Occasionally a person changed their own name in an attempt to describe how they felt. We find a great example of this in the book of Ruth. Read Ruth 1. As the chapter closes, what is Naomi’s complaint against God?

To what does Naomi change her name?

Naomi found herself in a hard place. She had experienced significant loss and her future looked bleak. While the name Naomi means pleasant, the name Mara means bitter. Feeling bitter toward God and her circumstances, Naomi changed her name to reflect her disposition. The name Ruth means friend, and as the story plays out, we see Ruth befriending Naomi in a way that changes her life. Other characters in Scripture experienced name changes as well. In fact, the Bible is full of them. For example:

<u>Old Name</u>	<u>New Name</u>
Abram ( <i>exulted father</i> )	Abraham ( <i>father of multitudes</i> )
Jacob ( <i>deceiver</i> )	Israel ( <i>contends with God</i> )
Saul ( <i>prayed for</i> )	Paul ( <i>small or humble</i> )

Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter. While the meaning of Simon (*one who has heard*) fits one of the New Testament's most outspoken characters, *rock*, represents Peter's character over time.

In Bible times when you knew someone's name, you knew something about a person because their name often revealed an aspect of their character or nature. We will see this again and again as we progress through our study of the names of God. In fact, by studying the names of God we will increase our understanding of His character and nature in so many ways. As we deepen our knowledge of God, our intimacy with Him will also be deepened. To know God by name is to know His character and when we know His character we are better able to trust Him.

Through this study we will come to know God by name. But, does God know us by name? Read Isaiah 45:1-4. To whom did God speak?

Did this person know God?

How did God address the man in this story?

Cyrus was a mighty King of Persia, famous in history. He did not know or serve the God of Israel, yet God knew him by name. What does this tell you about God and His knowledge of you?

Read Isaiah 43:1. In this verse God made a promise to Israel, but we can claim this promise as well. Fill in the blanks below to help you remember it.

“...Do not \_\_\_\_\_, for I have \_\_\_\_\_ you;  
I have called you by \_\_\_\_\_; you are \_\_\_\_\_!”

Does this verse bring you comfort? God wants us to rest in His character and live without fear in our lives. We belong to God and He has called us by name. God doesn't just know something about us. He knows us intimately and completely. Spend a few minutes meditating on this verse and allow the truth it contains to soak in.

Write it out on a notecard or piece of paper and tape it to your mirror. When life gets hard and we question whether or not we matter to God, it's important to remember God's words to us in this verse. Remember, God knows you by name and you belong to Him!



## DAY TWO: THE NAME OF THE LORD

When you consider the complexity of a person's character, you realize it would be impossible to accurately define someone with a single name. Likewise, capturing the essence and character of God in a single name is impossible as well. The complexity of God's nature requires us to use many names to describe Him. In fact, over 100 names and titles of God are found on the pages of Scripture. Let's just say we've got our hands full with this study!

Since God's character is complex and multi-faceted, sometimes Scripture refers to God simply by using the phrase the Name of the LORD. When we

see this phrase, we assume the writer is referring to the sum of God's character or making a statement regarding the entire person of God. The following verses all contain the phrase Name of the LORD. Read these verses and note any commands you find:

Psalm 9:10

Psalm 33:21

Psalm 52:9

Psalm 69:36

Isaiah 50:10

Zechariah 10:12

Zephaniah 3:12

God wants the knowledge of His name and character to impact our lives. In other words, we should live differently as a result of knowing God

intimately. Do you want to trust God? Do you want to take refuge in Him? Do you want to walk in faith and rest in Him? We can't live this way without knowing the depth of God's character. Spend a few minutes praying that God would help you to truly know Him by name. Write your prayer out here:

Read Proverbs 18:10. How is the Name of the Lord described?

What does it mean to run to God as though He were a strong tower?

In what ways do you feel safe when you run to God?

God wants us to be able to trust Him. He wants us to feel safe and secure, even when life seems uncertain. Psalm 91 describes what it's like to dwell in the shelter of God. Read Psalm 91:1-2. How does the psalmist describe God in these verses?

In what ways has God been a refuge for you?

As we'll see in this study, the more we learn about God's name and His character, the more we grow to love Him. Read the following verses. Note any ways we should respond to the knowledge of God's name and character.

Psalm 9:2

Psalm 30:4

Psalm 63:4

Joel 2:26

Malachi 3:16

Praise is a powerful thing. Praise tends to change our outlook on life and our attitude. It also helps put life into an eternal perspective. Spend a few minutes writing out a line or two of praise in your journal. Praise God for what His name represents and for the opportunity to know Him. Thank Him for being a strong tower to which you can run to find safety and security.

**"I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust!'" – Psalm 91:2**



**DAY THREE: *ELOHIM*(e-lo-heem)**

When studying the names of God, it only makes sense to start at the beginning...the very beginning.

**"In the beginning God (*Elohim*) created the  
heavens and the earth." – Genesis 1:1**

Genesis chapter 1 recounts all God created in those first seven days. In the Hebrew Bible, each time God is mentioned in this chapter, the name *Elohim* is used. In fact, *Elohim* is used exclusively in Genesis 1...thirty-two times!

In the ancient world, the word "el" was used to identify deity and the word "Elohim" was the plural form of *el*. *El* literally means mighty, strong, and prominent. Within the name lies the idea of creative power and mighty strength, a sovereign force that brings something out of nothing. Thus, when the name *Elohim* is used in Scripture, the writer is emphasizing God as the Creator. Even if you don't know much about the Bible, you probably know the story of creation recorded there. Read Genesis 1, but as you read it, replace the word "God" with the words "the Creator."

Why would God choose to emphasize His creative power at the very beginning of the Bible?

How does viewing God as your Creator change the way you respond to Him and His will for your life?

Although the story of creation is recorded in Genesis, the book of Job also contains passages that describe creation but from a slightly different perspective. These passages give us a behind the scenes look at the creative power of *Elohim*. Read Job chapter 38 and in the margin make a list of everything *Elohim* created.

Have you ever thought so poetically on the boundaries of the sea? Or, pondered the dwelling places of light and darkness, or the water jars of heaven? These images come from the realm of *Elohim*, the Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them. In Job 39, God continues boasting of His creative powers by demonstrating His intimate knowledge of His creation. Read Job 39. What point might God be trying to make?

God's intimate knowledge of His creation doesn't just pertain to animals. Read Psalm 139:13-16. What does it mean to be *thoughtfully and carefully made*?

What does this tell you about your Creator and what He thinks of you?

Why did *Elohim* create us according to Isaiah 43:7?

If you ever wanted to know your purpose in life, there it is in black and white! We were created *for God's glory*. Sound vague? We can better understand it by unpacking the concept of glorifying God. To bring glory to God simply means to give a correct estimation of Him. In other words, we glorify God when we represent Him accurately to the world around us.

Since God created us in His image, we have a head start, but sin has marred the image of God in us, often making it difficult for us to accurately represent Him. But, because our *Elohim* is working in us and through us, we can choose to do it. What else does *Elohim* have the power to create according to Psalm 51:10?

When we ask God to cleanse and renew us, we can better fulfill our purpose of bringing glory to our God. Take a minute and pray Psalm 51:10 for your life.

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul ties the concept of bring glory to God all together with a nice practical bow. How does Paul describe us?

Some translations use the word *masterpiece* in this verse. Wow! It means that we are the crown jewel in God's creation. But, God didn't create us to merely be a showpiece. He had a greater purpose in mind. According to this verse, what did God intend for us to do?

It's worth noting that these good works are not random or unplanned. When did God prepare them for us?

Walking in the good works God prepared for us is the best way to bring God glory. This is the purpose for which we were thoughtfully and carefully created. In the margin, write out a short prayer to *Elohim*, your Creator, thanking Him for knowing you so intimately. Ask God to cleanse your heart and empower you to do the good works He has prepared for you to do. These good works will give the world an accurate picture of God's character.



#### DAY FOUR: JOURNAL PSALM 8

As we begin to know God more intimately through His names, it is our prayer that we will be brought to a place of worship. In the fourth section of each lesson, we will cultivate a heart of worship by journaling through a psalm. As you read through each week's psalm, thoughtfully consider each verse and phrase. Allow yourself time to meditate on God's Word. Use a journal to respond to this section of homework. Read Psalm 8 in its entirety. When you hear the word "majestic" or "majesty" what comes to mind?

Where has God chosen to display His splendor? Praise God for the heavens . . . the stars . . . the moon . . . the sun. Praise Him for the daily reminder that His majesty and glory fills the earth.

In verse 3 David, the author of this psalm, says that creation reminds him of the greatness of God. Spend a few minutes contemplating the world God created. Consider the works of God's hand and praise Him.

The Creator God who made the heavens and earth and everything in them is never too great to consider and care for us (verse 5). Our God is both our Creator and our Keeper. Spend a few minutes thanking God that despite His grandeur and majesty, He chooses to personally and intimately care for us.

Verse 5 emphasizes our position in creation. We are God's masterpiece. This knowledge shouldn't puff us up. It should humble us. The God of the universe has bestowed upon us the high and holy calling of bearing His image to the rest of creation. Pray God will provide you with the grace and strength to bring glory to Him.

David ends this psalm in the exact same place where he started. Write verse 9 out in your journal.

Before you end your time today, reflect on the majesty of God's name. Allow this knowledge to fill your heart and your mind as you go about your week.



#### **SMALL GROUP: DOING LIFE TOGETHER**

What a great way to start a study on the names of God. Our God is powerful enough to give birth to all of creation, yet He is personal enough to know each of us by name. Our understanding of God can't help but grow over the course of this study! With that said, in what ways do you hope a study on the names of God will impact your life?

Has there ever been a time in your life when you could identify with Naomi's desire to change her name to reflect her situation? If so, what words or names would you use to reflect your current circumstances?

Read Isaiah 43:1 and spend a few minutes discussing the significance of worshiping a God who knows you by name.

In this chapter we read several psalms containing the phrase the "Name of the LORD." Which psalm meant the most to you and why?

Proverbs 18:10 describes the name of God as a strong tower. In what ways is God's character a source of safety and security?

We studied the name *Elohim* and were reminded of the fact that God created all of heaven and earth, including us. Why is it important that we acknowledge God as our Creator?

In Job 38 and 39 we read some beautiful word pictures describing the created universe. Which was your favorite and what does it tell us about God?

Read Isaiah 43:7 together. What does it mean to be created for God's glory?

In Ephesians 2:10 Paul provided us with some practical instructions on how to bring glory to God. Read this verse together and discuss its meaning.

What are some of the good works God has called you to walk in? Be specific as you share how God is using you for His purposes.

If time allows, read Psalm 8 aloud as part of your prayer time today.

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# Notes



<sup>1</sup> *Romeo and Juliet* (II, ii, 1-2).