

To Know Him By Name



An Intimate Look at the Names of God

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El Elyon: God Most High

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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!

El Elyon: God Most High

(EL el-YOHN)

“For you, O LORD, are the Most High over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.”

Psalm 97:9



DAY ONE: GOD MOST HIGH

Most cultures in the ancient world were polytheistic, meaning they worshiped many gods. In order to keep track of their many gods, ancient people developed names to identify them. They used the word *el* to refer to a god in general and they would often combine *el* with another word to describe that god’s abilities or strengths.

One of the names of our God is *El Elyon*. *Elyon*, simply means *highest*, or *most high*. When you combine “*el*” with “*elyon*,” you get a title meaning *God Most High*. From the very beginning, God wanted to distinguish Himself from the other gods man was worshiping. So, early on God identified Himself as the Most High God or *El Elyon*. The first time we find this name in Scripture, however, it isn’t completely obvious that it is referring to our God. Read Genesis 14.

In this story, Abram gets involved in a major war between nine kings because his nephew, Lot, had been kidnapped. According to verses 14-16, what happened when Abram got involved?

After the battle had been won, Abram went out to meet the King of Sodom in the King's Valley. Most likely, Sodom's monarch wanted to thank Abram for saving the day. In verse 18, we meet a new character in the story. Who is he?

What two titles are given to this man in verse 18?

Melchizedek, the King of Salem, has confounded Bible scholars for centuries. It's interesting that Melchizedek is identified as both a king and a priest. Nowhere else in Scripture is any one man recognized as king *and* priest until Messiah. What did this king/priest do for Abram in verse 19 and how did he specifically identify Abram?

There it is: *El Elyon*, God Most High. This is the very first time in Scripture that God is identified as the God Most High. What did Melchizedek say *El Elyon* possesses?

Essentially Melchizedek said: *Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, Elohim of heaven and earth*. In this verse Abram is associated with his God, and not just any god, but the same God for whom Melchizedek is a priest. Melchizedek distinguished God from all other gods by calling Him "God above all other gods," "the highest God," "the Creator of all." As the Most High

El Elyon: God Most High

God, Melchizedek attributed great power to *El Elyon*. With what did Melchizedek credit *El Elyon* in verse 20?

According to Melchizedek, *El Elyon* was not a distant god but instead He was a God who was personally involved in Abram's affairs. *El Elyon* gave Abram victory over his enemies. The Most High God, the one above all others, sovereignly controls the outcome of war. The Most High God determines victory and defeat, essentially life and death, and He exerts sovereign control over the entire universe. After all, every aspect of creation belongs to *Elohim*; it is His creation and as *El Elyon* He presides over it.

The sovereignty of *El Elyon* extends into every aspect of life. What do the following verses say about God's sovereignty?

Deuteronomy 32:39

1 Samuel 1:5-6

1 Samuel 2:6-10

Isaiah 45:6-7

Isaiah 46:9-11

Daniel 2:20-23

According to these verses, *El Elyon* is sovereign over all aspects of His creation. What thoughts do these verses generate? List them in the margin.

How have you seen *El Elyon's* sovereign hand in your life?

How does the concept of God's sovereignty encourage or comfort you?



DAY TWO: SOVEREIGN AND GOOD

The sovereignty of God is no easy thing to grasp, and we could spend a lifetime wrestling with the balance between man's responsibility and *El Elyon's* ultimate sovereignty. Commentator DiAnna Paulk said:

"There is a...realm in which God's will to act is dominant, and a realm in which man's liberty is given permission to act."

While on some level we can accept this statement, it is sometimes difficult to fully understand God's sovereignty. When we have difficulty understanding *El Elyon's* sovereign control over our lives, the truth of Isaiah 55:8-9 can bring tremendous encouragement. Read these verses. What do they say about our ability to fully understand God's ways? God makes it clear that there are some things we are just not going to comprehend because the ways and thoughts of *El Elyon* are above us. The context of these verses provides insight into the high thoughts and ways of God. To put this verse into context, read Isaiah 55. This chapter is nestled in the midst of Isaiah's many prophecies about Messiah and what He would do. What does Isaiah 55:6-7 specifically tell us to do?

El Elyon: God Most High

How does God respond when we seek Him through forgiveness?

So, just before we are told that God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours, we are told to seek God and He will freely pardon us. This is one of the many ways *El Elyon's* thoughts and ways are higher than ours. He offers salvation for a creation that deserves condemnation, not mercy. As a sovereign God, what does He have the power to do according to Isaiah 55:11?

And from 55:12, what will that word accomplish for us?

God's way, the highest way, revolves around providing compassion and pardon through the sacrifice of Messiah. God's ultimate plan of redemption is possible through His sovereign control over the entire universe. Only *El Elyon*, the Most High God, could defeat the forces of evil that have ensnared us and restore us to Himself. Psalm 78:35 confirms this. Write it out here:

Only the highest God can redeem. Only *El Elyon* reigns over life and death. Only our God can be relied upon for salvation. What do Psalm 34:8, Psalm 73:28 and Psalm 100:5 say about God?

What would it mean to have a sovereign God who was not good?

We can rest assured that our God, by whatever name we address Him, is both sovereign *and* good. The psalmist had no trouble recounting God's goodness. Look up the following verses and note the ways God reveals His goodness to us.

Psalm 25:8

Psalm 86:5

Psalm 119:68

Psalm 145:8-9

Scripture is full of *God is good* statements, especially in the Psalms. Read Psalm 52:8-9. For what does the psalmist wait or hope? Why?

El Elyon: God Most High

Why does he praise God?

Sometimes God's ways don't seem good to us, especially when sorrow or suffering is involved. What if your life doesn't seem so good to you? What if you feel like Naomi in Ruth 1:20-21 when she says, "...*the LORD has made my life very bitter....*" What then? Sometimes *El Elyon*, in His sovereignty, allows circumstances that do not seem good to us. But remember what He told us in Isaiah 55:6-7: "...*My ways are higher than your ways, My thoughts higher than your thoughts.*"

Accepting God's sovereignty and believing that He is good can give us hope that even though our situation may be hard, God is working another angle. And He promises it's for good. Read Romans 8:28-29. Write it out here:



DAY THREE: YOU MEANT IT FOR EVIL ...

Joseph, the eleventh and favorite son of Jacob, was a guy who could have honestly joined with Naomi and lamented that God had made his life very bitter. Joseph must have lain awake many nights wondering why things hadn't worked out the way he'd planned. Where was the God of his forefathers anyway? Read the beginning of Joseph's woes in Genesis 37. What did his brothers first want to do to him and what did they actually do?

What lie did they tell their father?

By the end of the chapter, where is Joseph?

Although Joseph never wanted to be sent away to Egypt as a slave, his slavery was actually the avenue through which God delivered him from the hands of his brothers. Joseph's captivity was God's sovereign way of intervening and saving Joseph's life. Even though Joseph could have easily blamed *El Elyon* for his circumstances, God was working all things out for good. And, as we will see later in the story, God not only used Joseph's captivity for Joseph's good, but God also used it for the good of an entire nation.

Is there an area of your life that appears to have gone terribly wrong? Think again on Romans 8:28. Ask God to help you believe His promise. Spend a few minutes thanking God for His promise to work all things together for good.

Read Genesis 39. Of what and by whom is Joseph falsely accused?

What was Joseph's master's reaction and what did he do?

Despite this terrible turn of events, what does verse 21 reveal?

Joseph may not have considered a life sentence for a crime he did not commit to be an act of kindness by his God. But very soon Joseph will find himself in charge of the entire prison. Verse 23 tells us why. Write the reason here:

El Elyon: God Most High

What do Genesis 39:6 and 39:22-23 have in common?

Like his time in Potiphar's household, Joseph's time in prison was used by God to train him for the even greater responsibilities that lay ahead. Read Psalm 57:2. Note briefly how it relates to Joseph's story in the margin.

While in prison, things got really interesting when Joseph was empowered by God to accurately interpret dreams. This ability eventually led to an audience with Pharaoh. Giving all credit to his God, Joseph soon found himself with the *carte blanche* of a C.E.O. Although Joseph had formerly exercised tremendous freedom over a rich man's household and a king's prison, this time Joseph was administrator over the entire Egyptian Empire. Wow.

Fast-forward about 10 years. Joseph was enjoying his position as Prime Minister of Egypt. He had married, fathered two sons, and presided over seven years of plenty and two years of famine. And then who should walk through the door one day but the brothers who had wanted to murder him over 20 years before.

Joseph's brothers didn't recognize him, but Joseph knew **them**. Genesis 42:7 says, "*As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them....*" Joseph didn't reveal his identity to his brothers at first. But eventually, in an elaborately planned feast, he dropped a bombshell on them. Read Genesis 45:1-9. How did Joseph acknowledge God's sovereignty over his life in these verses?

By this time in his life, Joseph had begun to see how God had been at work from the very beginning. Through His sovereignty, God allowed

hardship and suffering to move Joseph into the perfect position to accomplish the purposes of *El Elyon*. Joseph said it best in Genesis 50:20. Write it here:

Is there something in your past or even your present that someone meant for harm? Perhaps no one intended harm, but you have suffered just the same. Read Psalm 57:2 again. Write out a prayer in your journal to *El Elyon* asking Him to fulfill His purpose for you.

Close today's lesson by meditating on Psalm 9:1-2.

*"I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart and tell about
the wonders you have worked. God Most High, I will rejoice;
I will celebrate and sing because of you."*



DAY FOUR: JOURNAL PSALM 91

Psalm 91 is unique because four different names of God are used in the first two verses. The first name for God used in this psalm is *El Elyon*, God Most High. Slowly and thoughtfully read this psalm. Allow God's words to fall fresh on you today. Once again, use your journal to complete today's homework. In whose shelter are we to dwell? Where are we to abide?

Spend a few minutes clearing your mind of other distractions. Imagine yourself in the shelter of *El Elyon's* protection and in the shadow of the Almighty's power.

What does the psalmist call God in verse 2? What does God do in verse 3? Thank God for being and doing these things for you as well.

Read verse 4 again. Allow God's sovereignty to cover you. Seek refuge under the wings of His faithfulness. Journal your thoughts.

El Elyon: God Most High

Beginning in verse 5, the psalmist declares his faith in *El Elyon* and finds courage in His presence. Write out your own declaration of faith. Testify to the power of God's presence in your life.

In verse 9 the psalmist confirms that dwelling in the presence of the Most High God is a choice. Confirm your choice to dwell with Him.

According to verses 11-13, what happens to those to dwell in God's presence? Thank God for His provision and care.

Think on verse 14. Why has the psalmist been set "securely on high?"

God makes promises to the psalmist (and to us) in verse 15. Write out these promises in your journal. Our God Most High is on our side. *El Elyon* will never leave us nor forsake us. Spend time today thanking God for the way He answers us in times of trouble.



SMALL GROUP: DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Just think. We worship a God who is both sovereign and good. If either of these attributes was missing from God's character, we would be doomed. Fortunately for us though, God exercises His sovereign control hand-in-hand with His goodness. This week we examined Genesis 14 where the name *El Elyon*, Most High God was first used in Scripture. In this passage the priest Melchizedek identified

Abram as belonging to *El Elyon*, Creator of heaven and earth. Discuss how God's sovereignty was essential for God to have created the heavens and the earth.

Sometimes it's difficult to understand and see God's plan for our lives, especially when things get tough. In Romans 8:28-29 God promises that He is using all things to accomplish two things in our lives: goodness and conformity to Christ. Share a time when you saw God use a "bad" thing for good. How did God use this circumstance to conform you more to the image of His Son, Jesus?

In Isaiah 55:8-9 we are reminded that sometimes we will not fully understand the ways and thoughts of God. In what ways are God's plans higher than our own?

In Psalm 52 David says that he was content to wait on God's name because He is good. What do you think David meant by these words? Have you ever waited on God's goodness to come to you? How did the knowledge of God's character and name help you wait?

In this chapter we studied how Joseph was betrayed, sold into slavery, falsely accused and imprisoned. One of the fascinating things that happened in Joseph's story was the way God used something bad (betrayal and slavery) as the agent of rescue for Joseph. God could have delivered Joseph in any way He chose, but in His infinite wisdom and sovereign will, God chose to deliver Joseph through a plan involving trials and adversity. How has God used a path involving trials and adversity to bring about deliverance for you?

The time Joseph spent living in chains wasn't wasted. God used that time to mold and shape Joseph into someone capable of commanding all of Egypt. How has God used hard times in your life to prepare you for future service or ministry for Him?

Read Joseph's words in Genesis 50:20 below. Share any thoughts you have about Joseph's statement to his brothers.

Close your time together as a group in prayer, thanking God for His sovereignty and His promises to work all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

"We are assured and know that God being a partner in their labor all things work together and are fitting into a plan for good to and for those who love God and are called according to His design and purpose."

– Romans 8:28, *The Amplified Bible*

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Notes



¹ Paulk, DiAnna. *I AM That I AM: El Elyon*. www.path-light.com, 2002