

THE NAMES OF GOD

WE BELIEVE . . .

. . . the names of God reveal to us His character.

As we read the Bible we find that God frequently revealed His character to men. Knowing more about God helps us realize his perspective of us and what He wants to do in us and through us. It is important to first know this fact: as a born again believer, you already know God. You do not have to strive and struggle over many years to know God. He has made Himself known to you through His New Covenant. Jeremiah 31:31-34 reads,

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

Under the new covenant that God has set up, we automatically know the Lord. This is utterly amazing. We can talk to Him at any time. We have no need for formulas or repentance to approach Him because our sins and iniquity He remembers no more. Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us,

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.¹⁶ Let us therefore

come boldly¹ to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

You may have already come across teachings about how to approach God in prayer. If you haven't, you will. The truth is that if you are a child of God, there is no formula for approaching God. Coming with confidence before God is based on having Jesus as our High Priest. Not only does His blood continually cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:7), but He understands our weaknesses having lived on earth as we do.

So, important fact number one for this lesson is that you already know God well enough to talk to Him at any time of day. Important fact number two is because of the work of Jesus Christ, you may come to God without a formula. If every Christian understood those two facts all at once, I believe there would be a collective sigh of relief so enormous that the world would float a little lighter.

So, why study the names of God if we already know Him? In one sense, over time, in fellowship with God, we would know His character increasingly without a written word. Yet, He has provided for us such a rich resource in His word, that it only makes sense to learn more about Him through it.

We can look at it this way. When someone meets someone, falls in love, and gets married, he or she knows that person well enough to make a very serious commitment. However, anyone who has been married will tell you that he/she actually knew very little about his/her mate before getting married. Over time, we get to know more about our spouses. This is similar with God. We know Him immediately upon being born again, but through study in His word and experience with Him, we know more about Him.

The EL Names of God

“El” is a generic name for God that was used by other persons than the Israelites. However, in Scripture, El is combined with aspects of who God is. Some believe that this personalizes God. As you read these names, take a moment to consider how each aspect of God will help you understand Him better, influence your life, and help you better communicate about Him to others.²

¹ Verse 16 in the NASB reads, “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

² This list is from the Holman Dictionary.

El-Shaddai “God of the Mountains” or “The Almighty God.” This term is more closely associated with the patriarchal period and can be found most frequently in the books of Genesis and Job. Exodus 6:3 underlines El-Shaddai as the name revealed to the patriarchs. God used it to make His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:1-2).

El-Elyon “The Most High God” or “The Exalted One” (Num. 24:16; 2 Sam. 22:14; Ps. 18:13). Melchizedek was a priest of El-Elyon and blessed Abraham in this name (Gen. 14:19-20), referring to El-Elyon as “Maker of heaven and earth.”

El-Olam “God of Eternity” or “God the Everlasting One” (Gen. 21:33; Isa. 26:4; Ps. 90:2). God’s sovereignty extends through the passing of time and beyond our ability to see or understand.

El-Berith “God of the Covenant” (Judg. 9:46) transforms the Canaanite Baal Berith (8:33) to show God alone makes and keeps covenant.

El-Roi “God who sees me” or “God of vision” (Gen. 16:13). God sees needs of His people and responds.

Elohim Plural form for deity. It is a frequently used term and the most comprehensive of the “El” combinations. The plurality of this word is not a hint of polytheism. It is a plural of majesty. It is a revelation of the infinite nature of God. In the creation narrative we read: “Then Elohim said, “Let us make man in our image” (Gen. 1:26). This name suggests that there is a mystery to the Creator God which mankind cannot fully fathom. God is absolute, infinite Lord over creation and history. The Christian sees in this term a pointer to the Trinitarian reality of creation.

Jehovah (Yahweh) Names of God³

Also known as the *covenant* name of God, “Yahweh” speaks of God’s commitment and promise. Jehovah is not a different name, but the English translation used for Yahweh. Following is a list of the Jehovah or Yahweh names of God. Again, take a little time with each name in order to know God’s character and promises to you and how who He is will change your life and how it can change the lives of others you know.

³ This list was copied from the Holman Dictionary. The main text and bulleted text below the names are this author’s comments.

Yahweh-Jireh “The Lord will provide” (Gen. 22:14). This was the name given to the location where God provided a ram for Abraham to sacrifice in the place of Isaac.

- God will provide everything we need, from provision to deliverance. He provided a lamb, Jesus, to take our place.

Yahweh-Nissi “The Lord is my banner” (Exod. 17:15). Moses ascribed this name to God after a victory over the Amalekites. The name of God was considered a banner under which Israel could rally for victory. The Lord’s name was the battle cry.

- God gives us victory over any enemy.

Yahweh-Mekaddesh “The Lord sanctifies” (Exod. 31:13). Holiness is the central revelation of God’s character.

- God is the one who sanctifies you. He sets you apart from the world and unto Him for His purposes. By the blood of Jesus we are made holy. We are thus able to sanctify ourselves as Jesus did; apart from this world and unto the purposes of God.

Yahweh-Shalom “The Lord is peace” (Judg. 6:24). This was the name of the altar that Gideon built at Ophrah signifying that God brings well-being not death to His people.

- Peace is defined as the absence of war. God is not at war with us (Luke 2:14). We are not at war with Him. In every situation, we can find peace because God is peace (Philippians 4:6-7). He works for us, not against us (Romans 8:31).

Yahweh-Sabaoth “The Lord of hosts” (1 Sam. 1:3; Jer. 11:20; cp. 1 Sam. 17:45). This can also be rendered “the Lord Almighty.” It represents God’s power over the nations and was closely tied to Shiloh, to the Ark of the Covenant, and to prophesy. The title designates God as King and Ruler of Israel, its armies, its temple, and of the entire universe.

- God is not only ruler of our lives, but everything else. We can safely trust Him to be almighty on our behalf.

Yahweh-Rohi “The Lord is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1). God is the One who provides loving care for His people.

- To expand on the meaning of this name, read again Psalm 23, which begins, “Yahweh-Rohi is my shepherd,” and then goes on to demonstrate very beautifully how God behaves toward us, His sheep (Psalm 95:7).

Yahweh-Tsidkenu “The Lord is our righteousness” (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:16). This was the name Jeremiah gave to God, the Righteous King, who

would rule over Israel after the return from captivity. He would establish a new kingdom of justice.

- **In 2 Corinthians 5:21** it says, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be a sin offering for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Yahweh-Shammah "The Lord is there" (Ezek. 48:35). This is the name of God associated with the restoration of Jerusalem, God's dwelling place.

- *God now dwells in us and among us. God is there. (2 Corinthians 6:16)*

Names or Descriptions Used of God in the New Testament⁴

Most of the names we find in the New Testament are descriptions or roles. They tell what position God plays in our lives and allow us to see more of his character. Some of the names we think of as being New Testament names actually are recorded in the Old Testament because they were prophecy. So, let's begin in the Old foretelling of the New.

In Isaiah 9:6 we see these names, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called:

- **Wonderful**
- **Counselor**
- **Mighty God**
- **Everlasting Father**
- **Prince of Peace**

We have already extensively discussed these names in Lesson 4, but let's put them on the list.

- **The Father**

⁴ This list is not exhaustive.

- **The Son**

- **The Holy Spirit**

Here are more names used for Jesus.

- **Messiah** *John 4:24-2*

- **Lamb of God** *John 1:29*

- **The Way** *John 14:6*

- **The Truth**

- **The Life**

- **The Door** *John 10:9*

- **The Light of the World** *John 8:12*

- **Jesus**

- **Redeemer** *Titus 2:14*

- **Savior** *2 Timothy 1:10*

- **The Good Shepherd** *John 10:11*

- **Overseers of Our Souls** *1 Peter 2:25*

- **Son of Man** *Matthew 18:11*

- **Immanuel (God with Us)**

- **Bread of Life** John 6:48

- **Brother** Mark 3:35

- **Friend** John 15:15

- **High Priest** Hebrews 4:14-15

- **Advocate** 1 John 2:1

- **Mediator** 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 9:15-16; Hebrews 12:24

- **Lord** Philippians 2:10-12

- **Master** Ephesians 6:9

LIFE APPLICATIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The Names of God

1. Look again at the “El” names of God. Record what you can know about God through them.

2. We learned that **Yahweh-Rohi** means “The Lord is my shepherd” as recorded in Psalm 23:1. Here is Psalm 23 in the Amplified Bible (which expands on the meaning of the words used). Read it slowly and out loud.

¹ *The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.*

² *He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.*

³ *He restores my soul;*

*He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.*

*⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,*

I will fear no evil;

For You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

*⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of
my enemies;*

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD

*[and His presence] shall be my dwelling
place.*

3. In what ways is the Psalmist David showing us the character of God in the 23rd Psalm? How does the fact that God takes care of us like a shepherd takes care of his beloved sheep, affect your understanding of God?
4. Take another look at the other Yahweh names of God. Choose two or three and share why they are meaningful to you.
5. Go back to names of God found in the New Testament. Write below how each name of God touches your life or how it might help someone else you know.