

# THE NAMES OF GOD

**Wednesday Night Bible Study Devotional**  
Week 1



## DAY 1

# INTRODUCING GOD'S NAMES

## WHY STUDY GOD'S NAMES?

Throughout this study we're going to explore God's names in several different ways and from several different angles. But I want to acknowledge at the beginning that someone reading this study may be skeptical about such an exploration. That person may wonder, *Why do we need to study the names of God? Is that really important?* There are two main reasons the answer to that question is yes.

*1. It's important for us to study and learn about God's names because we're connected with those names as followers of Jesus. I'm a Christian. I'm inextricably linked to Christ and His name because of my status as a child of God. The same is true for anyone who considers himself to be a follower of Christ—including you. As we explore the majesty and power of God's names, we'll more deeply appreciate the privilege of being known for all eternity as followers of Christ.*

*2. It's also important for us to explore God's names because they provide opportunities to learn more about God Himself. More importantly, experiencing the wonder and power of God's names allows us to experience God more deeply.*

God wants us to come face-to-face with the many layers of His significance and identity. His names reveal various facets of His character. In fact, throughout the Bible, when God wanted to reveal a new part of His character to His people, He often did so by revealing a new name.

That's what happened with Moses in his encounter with God at the burning bush:

MOSES SAID TO GOD, "BEHOLD, I AM GOING TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL, AND I WILL SAY TO THEM, 'THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS HAS SENT ME TO YOU.' NOW THEY MAY SAY TO ME, 'WHAT IS HIS NAME?' WHAT SHALL I SAY TO THEM?" GOD SAID TO MOSES, "I AM WHO I AM"; AND HE SAID, "THUS YOU SHALL SAY TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL, 'I AM HAS SENT ME TO YOU.' "

**EXODUS 3:13-14**

**WHAT DOES THE NAME I AM TEACH US ABOUT GOD AND HIS ATTRIBUTES?**

## DAY 2

---

# THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S NAME

The ability to name a child is one of the greatest privileges exercised by parents—and one of the greatest responsibilities. Names are significant, and I believe parents should make the most of the opportunity by blessing their children with names that mean something, not just names that sound cool.

## HOW MAJESTIC IS GOD'S NAME

The beginning of Psalm 8 is one of the most popular and most frequently quoted verses in all Scripture about the splendor of God's name:

O LORD, OUR LORD, HOW MAJESTIC IS YOUR NAME IN ALL THE EARTH, WHO HAVE DISPLAYED YOUR  
SPLENDOR ABOVE THE HEAVENS!

**PSALM 8:1**

The names of God reflect the majesty and glory that intrinsically rest within Him. His name is nothing short of pure majesty. Discovering and experiencing the manifestation of His names in your life will usher you directly into the presence of our majestic God. That's what this study is all about.

**WHAT IDEAS OR IMAGES COME TO MIND WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORD MAJESTY?**

**WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN MOST IMPRESSED OR AWED BY THE MAJESTY OF THE NATURAL WORLD?**

WHEN I CONSIDER YOUR HEAVENS, THE WORK OF YOUR FINGERS, THE MOON AND THE  
STARS, WHICH YOU HAVE ORDAINED; WHAT IS MAN THAT YOU TAKE THOUGHT OF HIM, AND  
THE SON OF MAN THAT YOU CARE FOR HIM?

**PSALM 8:3-4**

The majesty of God is reserved for those who know enough to know they don't know much of anything at all. In other words, you can't know the splendor of God's names until you come to grips with the smallness of your own.

## HALLOWED BE GOD'S NAME

Jesus' words at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer also address the importance of God's name:

OUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.

**MATTHEW 6:9**

The term *hallowed* comes from the Greek word we typically translate as *holy*. It means *to be set apart* or *sanctified*. In other words, God's names are unique. They're not for us to mix up with anyone else's name or to treat lightly. God's names are hallowed. They're to be honored, respected, and treated with the reverence they deserve.

Obviously, God's names are to be treated with even higher respect than what we'd give to any person on earth. We're commanded to hallow His names—not only the verbalization of His names but also the way we think about and reflect on them.

To hallow God's names means to treat them as if they carry weight—as if they're significant. It means we recognize that God isn't an ordinary Being and that His names aren't ordinary names. We're not flippant about them. Certainly we shouldn't take His names in vain, as we'll see tomorrow. But we can also hallow God's names simply by choosing to use them only in a way that communicates reverence, respect, worship, and even fear.

To know God's names is to experience His nature, and that level of intimacy is reserved for those who are humbly dependent on Him. Because God doesn't share His glory with another (see Isa. 42:8), we must humble ourselves if we really want to know Him. We must recognize our own insignificance before we can experience the significance that comes only through Him.

### **WHAT STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN TO HONOR AND REVERE GOD'S NAME?**

God's name is majestic. It's unique and set apart—something worthy of being hallowed through our actions and attitudes. Only when we hallow God's name can we hope to truly experience its power.

## DAY 3

# TAKING GOD'S NAME IN VAIN

YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN, FOR THE  
LORD WILL NOT LEAVE HIM UNPUNISHED WHO TAKES HIS NAME IN VAIN.

EXODUS 20:7

**HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE WHAT IT MEANS TO TAKE GOD'S NAME IN VAIN?**

**WHERE IN OUR CULTURE DO YOU SEE GOD'S NAME BEING TAKEN IN VAIN?**

As we get ready to explore specific examples of God's names, let's first make sure we understand exactly what it means to take His name in vain. We also need to understand the consequences of making that unwise decision.

## A LACK OF SUBSTANCE

The word we translate as *vain* in Exodus 20:7 literally means *empty* or *without meaning*. It conveys the idea that something is without substance. Therefore, taking God's name in vain has to do with using God's name in a way that isn't consistent with the substance of His person and the weight of His character. It's the opposite of hallowing His name.

In short, to take God's name in vain is to strip away the value that belongs with God's name because it's connected to Him.

**WHAT EMOTIONS DO YOU EXPERIENCE WHEN YOU HEAR OTHER PEOPLE TAKE GOD'S NAME IN VAIN? WHY?**

**WHAT SITUATIONS TEMPT YOU TO USE GOD'S NAME IN VAIN?**

Sadly, taking God's name in vain is a common occurrence in the world today. Many people joke about God's name and toss it around flippantly. Worse, they fire it off in anger and use it as a curse. These are common examples of what it traditionally means to take God's name in vain.

A blatant example of using God's name in vain occurred in the garden of Eden. You know the story. Satan wanted to tempt Adam and Eve into disobeying God, and he started with these words:

THE SERPENT WAS MORE CRAFTY THAN ANY BEAST OF THE FIELD WHICH THE LORD GOD HAD MADE. AND HE SAID TO THE WOMAN, "INDEED, HAS GOD SAID, 'YOU SHALL NOT EAT FROM ANY TREE OF THE GARDEN'?"

**GENESIS 3:1**

In Genesis 2 God was referred to as the LORD God in relation to humanity, which is a combination of two names: Jehovah and Elohim. Elohim, the name of God used in Genesis 1, points to God as Creator, while Jehovah points to His relational authority over humankind. In the creation narrative those two terms combine to paint a powerful portrait of God as both the powerful Creator of the universe and the personal Lord over His creation.

Abusing God's name goes beyond cursing like a sailor or uttering phrases like "Oh my God." Too many of us want a God we can easily understand—a God to neatly display on a bumper sticker or on a coffee mug. But the true God won't be confined. His names reflect His character, and He wants a genuine love relationship with His children, not an empty relationship in which people use His names for their own purposes.

## A LACK OF FEAR

One reason so many people in our culture choose to take God's name in vain is that our culture as a whole has lost the fear of His name. We no longer respect God's position and power, so we no longer honor His name. We don't approach His name with the respect it deserves.

TEACH ME YOUR WAY, O LORD; I WILL WALK IN YOUR  
TRUTH; UNITE MY HEART TO FEAR YOUR NAME.  
**PSALM 86:11**

**READ PSALM 86:11-17. WHAT DO THESE VERSES TEACH ABOUT GOD AND HIS NAME?**

To fear God and His name can mean to be afraid of Him—to realize His awesome power in contrast with your weakness. Fearing God can also mean living with a reverence for and awe of who He is. In both cases fearing God's name ushers in the ability to walk in God's way and in His truth. It's the key to living an abundant life and to fulfilling your destiny as a member of God's kingdom.

Over and over in Scripture God showed up in people's lives in miraculous ways. And if we look closely at what He's revealed about the various aspects of His character through the manifestation of His names, we'll respond appropriately. We'll fear, revere, and worship Him because of His greatness and power.

In a similar way, if you pay attention to what God has done in your life, you'll fear Him. You'll give Him praise. Did He wake you up this morning? Has He supplied all your needs? Has He put food on your table, kept you safe, and healed your body? Even if you've suffered and experienced trials, hasn't He offered you the fullness of His presence and His peace when you've humbled yourself before Him? Hasn't He promised to be with you and never to forsake you?

For all these reasons and more, we're to honor and fear God's great name. And in honoring, knowing, and experiencing His name, we find power not only to face life's circumstances but also to rise far above them in the abundance of His mercy and grace.

**IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU RECENTLY EXPERIENCED GOD'S POWER AND PROVISION?**

## DAY 4

---

# INTRODUCING ELOHIM

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.

**GENESIS 1:1**

The name God used to describe Himself in Genesis 1:1 is Elohim, which means strong Creator God. Of all the different names for God in the Bible, He chose Elohim to be the first. This was His introduction. This was the first impression He offered to His creation.

## ELOHIM IS TRANSCENDENT

Maybe you haven't heard God described that way before. *Transcendent* is a big theological word that means God is distinct from everything He created. God isn't categorized within His creation. He's not a tree, a river, a butterfly, or anything else that exists as part of creation. God is lifted above and outside it all. He's transcendent.

Interestingly, the apostle Paul noted in Romans 1 that the existence of creation itself serves as evidence pointing to Someone who exists outside creation. In other words, the existence of creation itself points to the reality of a Creator:

SINCE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD HIS INVISIBLE ATTRIBUTES, HIS ETERNAL POWER AND  
DIVINE NATURE, HAVE BEEN CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD THROUGH WHAT HAS BEEN  
MADE, SO THAT THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE.

**ROMANS 1:20**

Another reason God introduced Himself as Elohim is that it distinguishes Him as being set apart from the constraints of time. When we read, "In the beginning God created ..." (Gen. 1:1), we discern that God created the beginning. He created time as we know it. And if God created time, then He preceded time, because you can't create time unless you first exist before time.

In other words, God is eternal. While we as human beings are forced to deal with the problem of time and its many consequences in our lives, the same isn't true of God. He transcends time.

**READ THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE AND RECORD HOW THEY CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF  
GOD'S ETERNAL NATURE.**

**ISAIAH 44:6-8**

**REVELATION 1:8**

Yet God existed when space didn't. He created the physical world we know as the heavens and the earth, so He exists outside that physical world. He transcends creation, time, space, matter, and anything else we can comprehend.



## ELOHIM IS IMMANENT

"AM I A GOD WHO IS NEAR," DECLARES THE LORD. "AND NOT A GOD FAR OFF? CAN A MAN HIDE HIMSELF IN HIDING PLACES SO I DO NOT SEE HIM?" DECLARES THE LORD. "DO I NOT FILL THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH?" DECLARES THE LORD.

JEREMIAH 23:23-24

These verses give us a glimpse into the delicate balance of God's presence, and I choose the word *balance* intentionally. In this passage God proclaimed Himself to be both transcendent *and* immanent. Elohim created the heavens and the earth, existing outside it. Yet that word *immanent* means Elohim also fills the heavens and the earth, existing within it. He is here, there, and everywhere!

[ELOHIM] SAID, "LET THERE BE AN EXPANSE IN THE MIDST OF THE WATERS, AND LET IT SEPARATE THE WATERS FROM THE WATERS." [ELOHIM] MADE THE EXPANSE, AND SEPARATED THE WATERS WHICH WERE BELOW THE EXPANSE FROM THE WATERS WHICH WERE ABOVE THE EXPANSE; AND IT WAS SO. [ELOHIM]

CALLED THE EXPANSE HEAVEN.

AND THERE WAS EVENING AND THERE WAS MORNING, A SECOND DAY.

GENESIS 1:6-8

Look at the action words in those verses: "God said." "God made." "God called." Our Creator isn't merely a spirit floating around in never-never land. While He's other-dimensional and beyond our comprehension, He's also intensely involved with His creation. In fact, if we skim a few chapters forward in the Genesis account, we find Him walking and talking with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day (see Gen. 3:8).

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR US TO RECOGNIZE THE FACT THAT GOD WANTS TO BE INTIMATELY ENGAGED WITH HIS CREATION?**

This aspect of God's nature is good news for us because it helps us understand that we don't live in an impersonal universe, nor do we serve an impersonal God. It's true that Elohim is transcendent and beyond our comprehension. But it's also true that He manifests Himself within creation and reveals Himself to us in ways we can understand.

## DAY 5

# ELOHIM: THE STRONG CREATOR

## RESPONDING TO GOD'S POWER

In the early pages of Scripture, God identified Himself as Elohim 35 times. In fact, Elohim is the only name used for God in Genesis 1:1–2:3. One reason I believe God placed this focus on Elohim at the beginning of His Word is that He wanted to display His power. The literal translation of the name Elohim means Strong One in the Hebrew language. The name communicates both God's sovereignty and His authority, and it reflects His ability to accomplish anything He desires.

BY FAITH WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE WORLDS WERE PREPARED BY THE WORD OF GOD,  
SO THAT WHAT IS SEEN  
WAS NOT MADE OUT OF THINGS WHICH ARE VISIBLE.

HEBREWS 11:3

**HOW DOES THIS VERSE REFLECT GOD'S POWER AS CREATOR?**

**WHY IS FAITH NECESSARY TO CONNECT WITH GOD AS CREATOR?**

I want to encourage you to remember the name Elohim whenever you face challenges or difficult circumstances in your life. Remember that your strong Creator God doesn't need any raw materials in order to work. He doesn't need logic or tangible solutions to accomplish His plan for you each day. All He needs is Himself, and all you need is faith in His name—faith that He can do all He purposes to do.

**HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY RESPOND WHEN LIFE GETS DIFFICULT? WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU TAKE?**

## RESPONDING TO GOD'S INVOLVEMENT

THE EARTH WAS FORMLESS AND VOID, AND DARKNESS WAS OVER THE SURFACE  
OF THE DEEP, AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD  
WAS MOVING OVER THE SURFACE OF THE WATERS.

GENESIS 1:2

THE LORD GOD CALLED TO THE MAN, AND SAID TO HIM, "WHERE ARE YOU?" HE SAID, "I HEARD THE SOUND OF YOU IN THE GARDEN, AND I WAS AFRAID BECAUSE I WAS NAKED; SO I HID MYSELF." AND HE SAID, "WHO TOLD YOU THAT YOU WERE NAKED? HAVE YOU EATEN FROM THE TREE OF WHICH I COMMANDED YOU NOT TO EAT?" THE MAN SAID, "THE WOMAN WHOM YOU GAVE TO BE WITH ME, SHE GAVE ME FROM THE TREE, AND I ATE." THEN THE LORD GOD SAID TO THE WOMAN, "WHAT IS THIS YOU HAVE DONE?" AND THE WOMAN SAID, "THE SERPENT DECEIVED ME, AND I ATE."

**GENESIS 3:9-13**

**WHAT'S YOUR INITIAL REACTION TO THESE VERSES? WHY?**

One of the greatest lessons to learn about God, about Elohim, is He can not only create from nothing, but He can also take something the Devil has junked up and fix it. He can make it right again. And He *will* make it right again because He cares. He's just that involved in our world and our lives.

When Satan attempts to bring mess into your life and produce death where there once was life, God's Spirit has the ability to turn what Satan has destroyed into something beautiful again. He can make something dead live again. Elohim is a God who transforms a mess into a miracle. He transforms darkness into light. He transforms the desolate, uninhabitable recesses of your soul into places of fertile growth.

When times are tough and you don't know how to solve the problems bearing down on you, remember Elohim. Remember that He can make something from nothing and let it flourish into something grand, even when it looks as if nothing is happening at all. He cares enough about His creation to bring order out of chaos—even in your life and mine. His is a great name because He's a great and powerful God.

**READ PSALM 139. WHAT ARE SOME WAYS GOD KNOWS YOU INTIMATELY?**

**WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO REMEMBER AND RELY ON ELOHIM'S POWER AND PERSONAL CARE FOR YOU?**



[WWW.INSPIREDTOLIVE.ORG](http://WWW.INSPIREDTOLIVE.ORG)

ADAPTED FROM:  
THE POWER OF THE NAMES OF GOD BY TONY EVANS

