

# Names of God-Brian Bill

1. God the Creator (Elohim)
2. God the Lord (Adonai)
3. God our Peace (Jehovah Shalom)
4. God our Provider (Jehovah Jireh)
5. God the Covenant Keeper (Yahweh)
6. God the Almighty (El Shaddai)
7. The God Who is There (Jehovah Shammah)
8. God the Healer (Jehovah Rapha)
9. God of Power (Jehovah Sabaoth)
10. God is my Banner (Jehovah Nissi)

## Knowing The Name Of God

Brian Bill

Scripture: Psalm 75:1

Summary: Names are important to us because they often do more than just identify an individual; they can actually reveal who a person is, and what he or she is like.

During a job interview, a woman was asked to give her name. She replied, "My name is Lilly." When the boss wanted to know why she was named after a flower, she told him, "My parents gave me that name because when I was born a lily fell on me from the sky." A couple days later, the boss interviewed a man for the same job. He wasn't much to look at and had a very rough appearance. The boss asked, "What's your name?" He gave a crooked smile and said, "Piano."

Names are important to us because they often do more than just identify an individual; they can actually reveal who a person is, and what he or she is like. God goes by many different names in the Bible. One commentator has counted over 63 found in Scripture. That seems like a lot but God is so awesome that the number of names we could use to describe Him is as endless as He is. These names provide us with at least two helpful truths.

They help us identify the one true God. The pagan nations worshipped false gods and so one reason God gave us His name is so we can know how He is different.

His names describe His character. When we study what He goes by, we will actually get to know what He is like.

While names are important in our culture, they were even more so in biblical times. Proverbs 22:1 tells us that a good name is more to be desired than great riches. Names didn't just distinguish or label a person; they were often thought to reveal the very nature of an individual. For example, Nabal, whose name means "fool," lived out what his name meant in 1 Samuel 25:25: "He is just like his name-his name is Fool, and folly goes with him."

The term for name in the Old Testament means "individual mark" and communicated an individual's essence. In the New Testament, the word for name comes from a verb that means "to know." To know the name of God means to personally know His personality. During this new series, it's my prayer that we will not just know who God is, but that we will actually get to know Him much more than we do right now.

As we begin our study, let me state four foundational principles:

These names are given by God, not thought up by people. God is not some abstract thought or nameless power. He is personal and knowable. And one of the ways His personality is known is through the giving of His names.

Each name of God reveals one of His qualities or characteristics. We'll focus on one of these attributes each week, and like studying a multifaceted diamond, when we're finished we'll appreciate His beauty like never before.

These names were given to God's people in order to help them through a moment of need. It's my prayer that this series will not just be academic, but deeply personal and heart-changing so that you will call out to Him when you are in crisis or need. These names are like miniature portraits filled with promises, given by God as a gift to us so we can actually know Him.

Use these names when you call out to God in prayer. While we will learn the Hebrew names for God, I encourage you to also memorize the English attributes and then use these titles in your praise and in your prayer times. As we go through each name, ask yourself this question: "Do I know God in this way?"

I have chosen ten names for our study that I think will help each of us grow deeper in our knowledge of God:

1. God the Creator (Elohim)
2. God the Lord (Adonai)
3. God our Peace (Jehovah Shalom)
4. God our Provider (Jehovah Jireh)
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Our study today will focus on the actual phrase, "Name of the Lord." This is really a summary statement that refers to God's whole character. As Judges 13:18 states, God's name is "wonderful." We're going to look at what the Bible teaches about the recognition of His name, our response to His name, and then we'll conclude with some results of knowing His name.

### **The Recognition of His Name**

In his book called, "Awed to Heaven, Rooted to Earth," Walter Brueggemann prays, "You are not the God we would have chosen." In commenting on this statement, Michael Card writes: "That troubling prayer resonates in my heart. For the truth is, most often I would have chosen (and indeed do choose) a god other than Him. Most often, I would rather not learn the hard lessons the hard way. I would rather not have to worship in the wilderness, where God continuously calls me to find and be found by Him. I would rather God simply meet my expectations, fix my problems, heal my hurts, and be on His way. I want a God who is faithful to me in ways I understand and expect, who expresses faithfulness in the ways I choose" (Discipleship Journal, Jan/Feb, 2005, 25-29).

One of the most helpful correctives to our selfish desires and egocentric expressions of prayer is to focus on who God actually is, not necessarily who we want Him to be. Let's begin by listing 6 statements that will help us grow in recognition of His wonderful name.

**1. His name is good.** Psalm 52:9: "I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good." Friends, never forget this: God is good, even when bad things happen!

**2. His name is great** 2 Samuel 7:25-26: "...Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever..." There is no greater name than the name of God.

**3. His name is majestic.** Psalm 8:1: "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" This means that His name, which stands for all that He is, is excellent and famous in the earth. There is no one else like Him. He is omnipotent and incomparable. Exodus 15:11: "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you--majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"

**4. His name is glorious.** Psalm 115:1: "Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory..." The word "glory" encompasses all of His attributes. The word literally means, "heavy" and refers to the fact that God is weighty, or awesome. Sometimes we try to make a name for ourselves as we crave credit for what we've done. We need to remember that His name alone deserves the glory.

**5. His name is holy.** When Jesus taught His disciples to pray he told them to begin like this in Matthew 6:9: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." His name must be set apart because He is holy.

**6. His name is near.** God is high and holy and yet, amazingly, He is also close to us. Theologically speaking, He is both transcendent and He is immanent. Allow this truth to penetrate you. He is not distant, but has instead come close to each one of us so that we can get to know Him. Psalm 75:1: "We give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks, for your Name is near; men tell of your wonderful deeds." God is powerful and He is also personal.

### **Our Response to His Name**

Once we recognize His name, we can't help but respond to Him. Here are some ways from Scripture that we are to respond.

## **1. Praise His Name.**

The number one reaction to recognizing His name is to break out into praise. The main reason we should focus on what He goes by is so we can give Him what He deserves. Daniel 2:20: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever..." Psalm 7:17: "I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High." One of the clearest expressions of people praising the name of God is found in Psalm 113:1-3: "Praise the LORD. Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised."

Job models for us that we are to praise Him even when our lives are full of problems and our minds are mixed up with emotions. Listen to Job 1:21: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." Let's see if we can apply this verse to the Tsunami disaster. Because Job knew the name of the Lord, he could praise Him even though a natural disaster had destroyed his ten children. Unbelievably, he was able to make an incredible statement of faith in Job 2:10: "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" Friend, the only way to praise God is to know His name. If you don't know Him personally, you may end up cursing Him when troubles come. If you'd like to study more about how God's sovereignty allowed this tsunami, we have printed copies available of John Piper's article called, "Tsunami, Sovereignty, and Mercy" (I've included a link to this article in my 1/3/05 blog: Making Sense of the Tsunami).

## **2. Honor His Name.**

God's name is so weighty that we must do all we can to honor it. Leviticus 19:12: "Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD." We are to praise His name, not profane it. Someone told me recently about a meeting where an individual was using God's name in vain with almost every other word. A Christian stood up and said, "God's a close personal friend of mine and you must also know Him well because you sure use His name a lot!" The guy cleaned up his language in a hurry. We should tremble whenever we hear His name used in a way that does not honor Him, and we should make sure we are not throwing His name around lightly ourselves. This is serious business because one of the 10 Commandments says: "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name" (Exodus 20:7).

## **3. Call on His Name.**

God desires for us to use His name as we call out to Him. Don't hesitate to hearken to Him. As you read through the Book of Genesis, it doesn't take long for people to call out to the Lord. We see this in Genesis 4:26: "At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD." Has it been awhile since you've called out to Him in prayer?

## **4. Proclaim His Name.**

When we praise, honor and call on His name, we can't help but share His name with others. Don't keep it to yourself. I talked to someone this week who told me that sometimes she is so filled with the joy of the Lord that she just has to tell others about Him. I encouraged her to let loose! Deuteronomy 32:3: "I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!"

## **5. Trust His Name.**

One of the best responses you can make to God is to decide to trust Him completely with your life. Is there something you're holding back? Are you afraid to fully surrender because you don't want to let go of some things? Perhaps you feel like the prophet did when he wrote in Isaiah 50:10: "Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God." Sometimes God knocks out props in our life in order to get us to totally trust Him. Stop walking around in the dark and transfer your trust to Him right now. Psalm 9:10 says that if we know God in a real and personal way, we will trust Him: "Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you."

## **6. Love His Name.**

There are many things in life that we can love, but we are to love His name above all. Isaiah 56:6: "...to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him." Can you honestly say that you love His name this morning? Do you love His name more than anything else? If not, what needs to change?

We must first recognize His name and then respond accordingly. When we do, we can expect at least 10 results. I'll go over these quickly.

**1. Our hope will grow.** Psalm 52:9: "I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good." If you struggle with discouragement, determine to put your hope in His name. You won't be disappointed.

**2. Our joy will increase.** Psalm 5:11: "But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you." Once we know His name, we can't help but be filled with joy. Conversely, if you aren't very joyful it could be because you don't really know Him.

**3. Our worship will deepen.** Nehemiah 1:11: "O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today..." When we grow in God, we will find incredible delight in worshipping Him, by the way we live, and by the way we commit ourselves to corporate worship every Sunday.

**4. We will be fully satisfied.** John Piper has stated it well: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." Do you feel unsatisfied today? It may be because you don't know God as well as you need to. If you're trying to stuff yourself with things that can't satisfy, you will be constantly needy. Get to know His name and your needs will be met. Ask God to make Isaiah 26:8 true in your life: "Your name and renown are the desire of our hearts."

**5. We will experience power.** There's power in the name of God, and He wants to unleash it in your life. Jeremiah 10:6: "No one is like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is mighty in power." He loves to show Himself strong when we are weak and He loves to demonstrate His power by accomplishing that which we think is impossible. David understood this truth when he came before a giant problem named Goliath. Listen to what he declared to the frightening Philistine in 1 Samuel 17:45: "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."

**6. We will become wiser.** All of us can stand to grow in wisdom. One of the byproducts of knowing the Name of God is increased wisdom. Micah 6:9: "...To fear your name is wisdom..."

**7. We will receive help.** Do you need any help today in a situation you're facing? Take heart and meditate on Psalm 124:8: "Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." Others may be able to provide assistance and counsel, but the help you really need is only found in the Name of the Lord.

**8. We will be protected.** When you're in trouble, claim the promise of Psalm 91:14-15: "Because he loves me, says the LORD, I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him." One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 18:10: "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." God's name is like a fort of protection for the believer. Run to Him for safety.

**9. We will be granted forgiveness.** Forgiveness comes through His name and His name alone. Psalm 25:11: "For the sake of your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great." Psalm 79:9 gives another aspect of this: "Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake." We can appeal to God for forgiveness because at His very nature, He is a forgiving Father.

**10. We will be saved.** Ultimately to call on the name of the Lord brings salvation. Psalm 116:4: "Then I called on the name of the LORD: 'O LORD, save me!'" This is picked up by Peter in Acts 2:21 and Paul in Romans 10:13 when they quote from the prophet Joel: "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Have you ever called on Him for salvation? In John 17:3, Jesus expands our understanding in this regard when He prayed: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." In order to be saved, you must know God and you must know Jesus Christ. Do you?

If you're ready to begin a relationship with the God who knows your name, call out to Him right now. Tell Him that you're a sinner and that you can't save yourself. Repent from the way you've been living. And then ask Him to personally apply the work of Jesus on the Cross to your account, where His blood was shed for forgiveness of sins. Receive the free gift of eternal life and surrender to His name everyday. And then, confess with your lips that you now know Him. Proclaim His wonderful name to others and determine to know all you can about Him. To help you begin a relationship with the God who knows you and wants to make Himself known to you, you could pray something like this: "In the Name of Jesus, I come before you right now. I confess that I have been living for my

own name. I am a sinner and I can't save myself. I now turn away from the way I've been living and turn toward you in faith. I call out to your name for salvation. Save me from my sins. I believe that you died in my place and that your blood covers my sins. I gratefully receive the free gift of eternal life. And now I surrender to you. Your name is what matters, not my own. Do with me what you will for the rest of my life for I now belong to you. Amen."

### **Knowing God or Knowing About God?**

If you're already a believer, let me ask you a question. Are you geared up to really know God, or are you content to just know a few facts about Him? I love what Charles Spurgeon wrote:

"No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God...But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. The most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity" (Quoted in the Introduction to "Knowing God" by J.I. Packer).

I came across a list of questions from Don Whitney which will help us as we consider how this year can be different from last year (for a list of all thirty-one questions, [see this link](#)).

- What's one thing you can do this year to increase your enjoyment of God?
- What's the most humanly impossible thing you will ask God to do this year?
- What's the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your family life this year?
- In what spiritual discipline do you most want to make progress this year, and what will you do about it?
- What's the most important way you will, by God's grace, try to make this year different from last year?
- What one thing could you do to improve your prayer life this year?
- What single thing that you plan to do this year will matter most in 10 years? In eternity?
- What's one thing you could do this year to enrich the spiritual legacy you will leave to your children and grandchildren?
- What single blessing from God do you want to seek most earnestly this year?
- In what one area of your life do you most need to change, and what will you do about it this year?

As I look at this list, it strikes me that I can make progress in all ten of these areas if I will go after knowing God like I never have before. Are you with me? Will you commit to be here for the next ten weeks and roll up your sleeves as we study the Scriptures together? If you have to miss a Sunday, will you download the message from our website and study it on your own ([www.pontiacbible.org](http://www.pontiacbible.org))? Let's not take this lightly.

I love the book of Job. With all its pain and agony, it's full of faith and hope. At the end of the book, after God recites a litany of His powerful acts, Job becomes literally speechless. When he's finally able to formulate some words, listen to what he says in 42:5: "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you." Some of you are in the same place this morning. You've heard about God, but now you really want to see Him in His fullness.

### **Prayer of Commitment**

As we close, I'd like you to stand and pray this prayer with me that originally appeared in A.W. Tozer's book called, "The Knowledge of the Holy" (Page 18).

"O majesty unspeakable, my soul desires to behold Thee. I cry to Thee from the dust. Yet when I inquire after Thy name it is secret. Thou art hidden in the light which no man can approach unto. What Thou art cannot be thought or uttered, for Thy glory is beyond comprehension. Still, prophet and psalmist, apostle and saint have encouraged me to believe that I may in some measure know Thee. Therefore, I pray, whatever of Thyself Thou hast been pleased to disclose, help me to search out as treasure more precious than fine gold: for with Thee shall I live when the stars of the twilight are no more and the heavens have vanished away and only Thou remainest. Amen."

## **God The Creator (Elohim)**

by Brian Bill

Scripture: Genesis 1:1

Summary: Turn with me to Genesis 1 and follow along as I read the opening verses. I'll insert this Hebrew name as I read: "In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth."

Because I have three first names, people often don't know what to call me. I can see the hesitation on their faces. Is his name Brian or is it Bill? My middle name is John so I like to say when you use my full name three guys come running! I've gone by many names in my life...

- Ibam – This is what one of my little sisters called me when she couldn't pronounce my name. Unfortunately, all my sisters still call me this today...
- Brian John Bill – This was my mom's favorite name for me when I did something to make one of my sisters cry.
- Buckshot – I loved it when my dad would call me this name, particularly after I shot my first buck when I was 12.
- Billsy – This is what I was known by in high school.
- Billsky – This is what people would call me when I would do something dumb.
- Mr. Bill – When people use this name, they inevitably follow it up with "Oh, no!"
- Cheesehead – When individuals call me this, they're really wishing that they too could be from the other side of the Cheddar Curtain.
- Pastor Brian – This name reminds me that I am a shepherd of God's flock.
- Reverend – My girls like to call me this when I share a sermon idea with them. It's not usually used as a compliment, "Thanks for sharing that, Reverend."
- Bri – I love it when Beth calls me this.
- Daddy – This name is reserved for my four daughters and when they use it, I melt.

I've been called other names that I can't repeat here, and I'm sure I've been given some monikers behind my back as well. While I can't always control how people refer to me, I do love it when someone asks, "What do you want to be called?" Most of the time, I just give my first name: "Feel free to call me Brian."

In an even greater way, God has given us some names to use when we refer to Him. Last week we learned that God loves it when we call on His name. And today we're going to look at His very first name as found in the very first verse in the very first book of the Bible. It's the name "Elohim." Turn with me to Genesis 1 and follow along as I read the opening verses. I'll insert this Hebrew name as I read: "In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of Elohim was hovering over the waters. And Elohim said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. Elohim saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. Elohim called the light 'day,' and the darkness he called 'night.'"

This first name for God is used more than 2,500 times in the Bible, 32 times in the first chapter of Genesis alone. Most scholars believe Elohim derives from the word El, which in turn comes from the word for "strong." Specifically, this name means that He is the strong Creator God. When we pray to Elohim we remember that He is the One who is creatively powerful, completely sovereign, and gloriously great.

#### **Four Forceful Facts**

The Book of Genesis gets its name from the Hebrew – It's the book of "beginnings." This book is also a battleground today because many in our culture reject its clear teachings. We don't have time this morning to dig into its depths but suffice it say that you have a choice. You can either believe what the Bible teaches, and swim against the current of our culture; or you can follow the crowds, and be at odds with Elohim. Because God calls Himself Elohim, there are at least four foundational facts about this name that will fortify our faith.

##### **1. Elohim is Eternal (Genesis 1:1a).**

Some men were trying to answer the question, "Where did the earth come from?" After compiling their data and feeding it into a sophisticated supercomputer, they pushed the answer button with great anticipation. Lights flashed, buzzers sounded, and finally the computer spit out the answer: "See Genesis 1:1." Let's do that right now. Look again at the first four words: "In the beginning God [Elohim]..." By the way, this is the first instance of baseball in the Bible – "in the big inning." This is a declaration that God has always been; He's had no beginning and He will have no end. This is stated strongly in Deuteronomy 33:27: "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Augustine was once asked what God was doing before He created the world. He thought for a moment and replied, "He was creating it for people who ask questions like that."

Did you notice that Genesis 1:1 is a simple declaration of Elohim exists, and does not provide an explanation for His existence? That Bible just assumes that He is. Several years ago, in his unforgettable style, E.V. Hill spoke for 40 minutes at a Promise Keepers event in Chicago. He preached on just two words: "God is." He repeated this phrase over and over, whispering it and shouting it and daring anyone to deny it. Friends, God is. He is eternal. That reminds me of the boy who once prayed, "Dear God, please take care of my daddy and my mommy and my sister and my brother and my doggy and me. Oh, and please take care of yourself, God. If

anything happens to you, we're gonna be in a big mess." Aren't you glad that nothing will happen to the Holy One? He is here today. He was here yesterday. And He will be here tomorrow. He was, He is, and He will be. You can count on Him. As Psalm 14:1 says, only those who are foolish doubt God's existence: "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

2. Creationism is Correct (Genesis 1:1b). Because God alone is eternal; that which is created is not. Look at the last part of Genesis 1:1: "...created the heavens and the earth." The Hebrew word for "create" means "to create out of nothing." Elohim brings design out of disorder; He created the cosmos out of chaos; He birthed beauty out of barrenness, and He continues to do the same in lives today. Let's look at just a few more phrases from Genesis 1:

- "So God made the expanse..." (7)
- "...He also made the stars." (16)
- "So God created the great creatures of the sea..." (21)
- "God made the wild animals..." (25)
- "God saw all that He had made and it was very good..." (31)

It is no accident that the first thing God wanted us to know about Himself is that He is the Creator. The whole revelation of Scripture is rooted in this fact, from Genesis to the Book of Revelation.

- Psalm 95:6: "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker..."
- Psalm 121:2: "My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."
- Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth..."
- Isaiah 45:9: "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker..."
- Acts 17:24: "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands."
- Revelation 4:11: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

The early church viewed the doctrine of Creation as the beginning point of theology, and a bedrock biblical belief. Its importance is summed it up at the very beginning of the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth..." Former Atheist Lee Strobel, in his outstanding book called, "The Case For a Creator," concludes that when he researched the central pillars of evolutionary theory they "quickly rotted away when exposed to scrutiny" (Page 279). I wish I had the time to share with you all the exciting recent developments in the world of science as scholars are discovering what the Bible has always said: The universe was made by an intelligent designer! Students, remember this: Evolution is just a theory and many of those who have argued for it are now declaring that it doesn't hold up to scientific scrutiny. Let me briefly mention a few flurries of what is really an avalanche of compelling information.

DNA evidence. Anthony Flew, who for half a century, has been a leading champion of atheism, and perhaps the most famous, has recently said that a super intelligent being is the only good explanation for the origin of life and the complexity of nature. In a new video entitled, "Has Science Discovered God?" Flew states: "DNA has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved" (Chicago Sun Times, 12/10/04. Also, see my 1/11/05 blog: [www.pontiacbible.org/brian](http://www.pontiacbible.org/brian)).

The anthropic principle states that the physical structure of the universe is exactly what it must be in order to support life.

The evidence of cosmology points out that whatever begins to exist must have a cause.

The evidence of consciousness. This refers to our sensations, thoughts, emotions, desires, beliefs and choices. Even Darwinist philosopher Michael Ruse candidly concedes that "no one, certainly not the Darwinian as such, seems to have any answer" to the consciousness issue (Strobel, Page 283).

On Christmas Eve, 1968, the three astronauts of Apollo 8 circled the dark side of the moon and headed for home. As their tiny capsule floated through space, they gazed on planet earth. What do you think they did? They did not quote Einstein, Shakespeare or Darwin. There was only one statement that could capture the magnificence of that moment. As billions of people all around the world listened, an astronaut acknowledged Elohim as Creator as he read these words: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Illustration from Ray Pritchard).

Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." His fingerprints are everywhere. The earth is marked, if you will, by a sign that declares in bold letters: Made by God. Romans 1:21 states that the evidence for Elohim's creative power is clearly evident: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." If you're willing to

look, you will see. And because He is the Creator, He is greater than that which He has created. That means you can trust Him because there is nothing in your life that is greater than He is. He can solve whatever problem you have, if you will but trust Him by faith. Hebrews 11:6: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

### **3. The Trinity is True (Genesis 1:26-27).**

The third application from the name Elohim is actually an allusion to the Trinity. The "im" ending of Ehohim is a plural suffix. This is similar to cherub becoming cherubim, and the plural of seraph being seraphim. Here's the cool part. Although the name Elohim is plural, it is often treated as a singular noun. Look at Genesis 1:26-27: "Then God [Elohim, plural] said [singular], 'Let us [plural] make man in our [plural] image, in our [plural] likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God [Elohim, plural] created man in his [singular] own image, in the image of God [Elohim, plural] he [singular] created him; male and female he [singular] created them."

While this verse alone doesn't fully develop the doctrine of the Trinity, here we see that God is one and yet is somehow plural. God, who is eternal in nature, has always existed in three persons. This concept is found throughout Scripture. At the baptism of Jesus, we see God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (see Matthew 3:16-17). When Jesus gave the Great Commission to the church, He called on all three members of the Trinity in Matthew 28:19: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Baptism is to be in the name [singular] of three persons [plural]. One of the clearest passages is found in 2 Corinthians 13:14: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." God the Father sent the Son to save us from our sins and now the Holy Spirit has sealed our salvation. The Trinity makes redemption possible.

Have you picked up yet that all three of our points so far are hot button issues? The name Elohim establishes that God exists, that He is the Creator, and that He is three-in-one. While these three truths have their detractors, and stir up considerable controversy, there's still one more application that flows out of Elohim, and this one generates even more heat.

### **4. Every Person Has a Purpose (Genesis 1:26-27).**

Simply put, every person is made in the image of God and therefore has dignity, worth, and purpose. Look again at Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." The word "created" is used three times and we're told twice that humans are made in the image of a holy God. The late Francis Schaeffer, the noted apologist, once said, "If I had an hour to spend with a person on an airplane who didn't know the Lord, I would take the first 55 minutes and talk about man being created in the image of God. And the last five minutes on the presentation of the gospel of salvation that can restore man to that original intended image" (as quoted by John MacArthur, "Creation: Believe it or Not").

Today begins what has been declared "Sanctity of Human Life" week. Each year we take some time to reflect on issues of life, marking the awful anniversary of Roe v. Wade in 1973, which legalized abortion in this country. God as Elohim leads us to the uncompromising conclusion that life is a gift given by the Creator and therefore must be protected. I love what President George W. Bush has said about this topic: "We share a great goal, to work toward a day when every child is welcomed in life and protected in law...to build a culture of life, affirming that every person at every stage and season of life, is created equal in God's image" (Sandra Sobieraj, Associated Press, as quoted by Troy Borst, SermonCentral.com).

Ecclesiastes 11:5: "As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things." With the advent of ultrasound, we can now see pictures of the preborn and watch their development, as if there was a window into the womb. Amazingly, Psalm 139 paints a vivid picture thousands of years before technology: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." David, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is allowed to take a peek into God's prenatal care unit. The "you" in verse 3 is emphatic – You created. God is the creator and He is intimately involved with us because He made us. It's that simple. His constant concern for us is simply the natural interest that a maker would have in a very special product. He is the owner of the preborn – they belong to Him.

Randy Alcorn, in his new book called, "Why Pro-Life?" points out three stunning statistics (Multnomah Press, 2004).

- Abortion is America's most frequently performed surgery on women.
- More babies are aborted each day (3,753) than all the lives lost on 9-11.
- And, here's some good news. Today, more young people than their parents oppose abortion. A recent Gallup survey of teenagers found that 72% believe abortion is morally wrong.



Now here's some even better news. Just as many evolutionists are now admitting that an Intelligent Designer created the world, so too, most honest people now admit that life begins at conception. Just a short time ago, one of the arguments in favor of abortion was that because no one knew when life began, than it must be OK to terminate a pregnancy. That's changing. Listen to what the owner of Oregon's largest abortion clinic testified to under oath, "Of course human life begins at conception" (Alcorn, Page 27). An honest survey of scientific evidence will lead to a recognition of the existence of God and that life begins at conception. Randy Alcorn writes, "It's an indisputable scientific fact that each and every surgical abortion in America stops a beating heart" (Page 30).

I've put this image up on the screen the last several years but I have to do it again because a picture is worth a thousand words. In 1999, an unborn child named Samuel was operated on for spina bifida. His photograph in Life magazine captured the entire world's attention. During surgery, Baby Samuel reached out and grabbed the surgeon's finger. What I didn't know until this week is that photojournalist Michael Clancy went from being pro-abortion to being pro-life as he witnessed this procedure and recorded it with his camera. As he put it, "I was totally in shock for two hours after the surgery...I know abortion is wrong now—it's absolutely wrong" (Alcorn, Page 39).

In another award-winning photo, a preborn baby named Sarah Marie Switzer, had a similar procedure done (see [www.forerunner.com/fyi/news/lm1299.htm](http://www.forerunner.com/fyi/news/lm1299.htm)). This has been called "the world's most pro-life photo."

Friends, if wombs had windows, the vast majority of people would confess that God is the Creator and then would do all they can to preserve the life of the preborn. Here are some some amazing 4D Ultrasound images: [www.firstsightultrasound.com/4d\\_liveSA.htm](http://www.firstsightultrasound.com/4d_liveSA.htm) and [www.gehealthcare.com/usen/ultrasound/4d/virtual.html](http://www.gehealthcare.com/usen/ultrasound/4d/virtual.html).

Since God is the Creator of life, and life begins at conception, we're called to be advocates for those voices that can't be heard. Proverbs 31:8-9: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." Tomorrow as we remember Martin Luther King's impact on human rights, let's also recognize that we still have a long way to go to protect the greatest of all human rights – the right to life for the preborn.

Because God's first name is Elohim, He is there for us. As such, we can trust Him with four "therefores."

1. He is eternal...therefore His existence is established
2. Creationism is correct...therefore evolution is in error
3. The Trinity is true...therefore redemption can be received
4. Every person has a purpose...therefore the preborn must be protected

I am so grateful that Elohim continues to recreate today. He loves to forgive. He loves to wipe away guilt and shame. And today, He can give you a fresh start if you will turn to Him in faith. Claim the promise of 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

In order to help us get a better handle on this topic we want to visually demonstrate the magnitude of abortion. When you add up all the numbers, it's really an abortion tsunami. We'll then conclude with some practical ways that you can get involved in this issue as we hear a report from our very own Beth Albrecht of the Caring Pregnancy Center.

#### **Related Resource:**

- [Elohim: My Creator](#)

## **God The Lord (Adonai)**

Brian Bill

Scripture: Genesis 15:2

Summary: When we say that God is Adonai, we are stating that He is Lord of all and that He is supreme over His subjects.

This week I saw someone I don't know real well and called out her name. I thought I got it right but as soon as I said it I realized that I had used a shortened form of her proper name, and she wasn't too happy about it. She corrected me quickly and told me what she prefers to be called. I apologized and made a mental note to get it right next time.

God has some strong feelings about what He goes by as well. And He doesn't want us to use names that are too casual or even commonplace. I'm sure He's not real impressed when we refer to Him as the "big guy in the sky" or the "man upstairs."

We learned last week that the first name He wants to be called is “Elohim.” He is creatively powerful, completely sovereign, and gloriously great and because of who He is, we can draw four conclusions.

1. He is eternal...therefore His existence is established.
2. Creationism is correct...therefore evolution is in error.
3. The Trinity is true...therefore redemption can be received.
4. Every person has a purpose...therefore the preborn must be protected.

On Monday morning, as I reflected on this, I thanked God for the ministry of the teachers and staff at Pontiac Christian School and wrote these words on my blog: “Day after day, Pontiac Christian School unashamedly teaches these four biblical truths. Our students are developing a respect for the Word of God and an ability to think critically about controversies in our culture. My hat is off to this team of committed Christians who are going against the grain in order to exalt Elohim everyday! If you’re looking for a Christ-centered biblical education for your children, please contact the school. Preschool screenings are now being conducted” ([www.pontiacbible.org/brian](http://www.pontiacbible.org/brian)).

The name we’re going to get to know today is “Adonai.” It’s used over 300 times in the Old Testament, and is a bit difficult to see in our English Bibles because many translations use two different renderings of the same name to make a distinction between “Yahweh” and “Adonai.” Jehovah appears with capital letters: “LORD” and Adonai is “Lord” with one capital and the rest in smaller case. When this word is used of God it is almost always plural and possessive. Like the name Elohim, this name also supports the doctrine of the Trinity.

In the singular, the word Adon often refers to “Master” and is also defined as “Lord” or “Owner” and is used for how slaves speak to their masters and subjects to their kings. When we say that God is Adonai, we are stating that He is Lord of all and that He is supreme over His subjects. Deuteronomy 10:17 uses three names for God and captures His majestic supremacy: “For the LORD [Yahweh] your God [Elohim] is God [Elohim] of gods [Elohim] and Lord [Adonai] of lords [Adonai], the great God [Elohim], mighty and awesome...”

In order to help us capture the meaning of Adonai, let’s turn to the world of pets. How many of you have a dog? Let me see your hands if you’re a cat lover. Do any of you have both a cat and a dog? We have counselors set up in the back of the auditorium for you! In his book called, “Cat and Dog Theology,” Bob Sjogren describes the different attitudes between a dog and a cat.

A dog says: “You pet me, you feed me, you shelter me, and you love me... you must be God.”

A cat says: “You pet me, you feed me, you shelter me, and you love me...I must be God.”

In a humorous way, this book captures how we often approach God. Both cats and dogs want obedience in their lives. Dogs want to obey God; cats want God to obey them. Dogs worship God primarily for who He is; while cats enjoy what He’s done for them. Dogs study “Theology” and cats study “MEology.”

Isn’t it easy to think that life is all about us? God does not exist for our benefit; we have been given good gifts for His glory. Let’s do a selected Scriptural survey of “Adonai” to help us get our priorities and purposes back on track so that we become more like canines instead of cats.

## **Adonai in the Old Testament**

We’ll look at two Old Testament individuals who struggled to fully surrender and then at two who got it right.

### **1. Abraham argues with Adonai.**

Adonai is first used by Abraham in Genesis 15:2: “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” The NIV translates Adonai as “Sovereign,” while other versions use the name “Lord.” This interaction should encourage us since it shows us that Abraham was a real person. He had left his country in Genesis 12 and at Bethel “called on the name of the LORD” (12:8). He obeyed the Lord but then he resorted to a lie to protect his wife when they were in Egypt. In chapter 13, Abram and Lot separate, and then Abram experiences the blessings of God in verse 17 when God tells him, “Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.” In chapter 14, Abram rescues Lot from some trouble.

Things are going along pretty well and then we come to chapter 15. Abram knows God as Creator and God Most High (see 14:22), but now he questions Adonai in verse 2. He calls him “Sovereign” with his lips but in his heart he is filled with doubt. God had promised him a son but all he has is a servant. Do you ever feel like that? In order to expand Abram’s view of Adonai, God takes him

outside in verse 5 and declares, “‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’” God is really saying, “Abe, since I placed the stars in the heavens, do you think your childlessness is an insurmountable problem to me?” Once he is reminded of the bigness of God, Abram “believed the LORD...” But then he yo-yos again in verse 8: “O Sovereign [Adonai] LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?” Abram is acknowledging his own insufficiency in light of God’s sufficiency. He doesn’t understand, but he does use the name Adonai to communicate his commitment to live under the leadership of the Lord, while at the same time, he has questions. God then confirms His word by entering into an irrevocable covenant with Abraham.

Abraham was suffering from “MEology.” When he didn’t understand something or when things started getting difficult, in essence he hissed like a cat at the Creator. God was taking him through a process so that he could eventually learn that He is Lord, not Abram. Likewise, we have to come to the point of realizing that God is the Lord of all we own, all that we are, and all that we do.

Adonai was teaching Abraham two truths that run through the entire Bible.

- Adonai owns everything.
- We must obey Adonai.

We could say it this way. Because God has possession of me, I must be in submission to Him. Since He is Lord, I must live under His leadership. He is majestic and mighty; I am but a manager of the resources He has given me. I need to become more like a dog and less like a cat. I exist for Adonai; He doesn’t exist for me, myself and I. This is summed up beautifully in Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” He’s the owner and I must obey Him. Peter Forsythe was right when he said, “The first duty of every soul is to find not its freedom but it’s Master” (as quoted by Warren Wiersbe, “The Integrity Crisis,” p. 22).

In one of his recent books Larry Crabb writes this: “There are two basic approaches to life—two pathways. One creates pressure, the other provides freedom. In the Old Way of life, ‘you’ve decided that what you most want out of life is within your reach, and you’re doing whatever you believe it takes to get it.’ But in the New Way of life, ‘you’ve realized that what you most want is beyond your reach, and you’re trusting God for the satisfaction you seek. You want Him. Nothing less, not even His blessings, will do” (From the back cover of “Pressure’s Off,” Waterbrook Press, 2002).

When Queen Victoria had just ascended to her throne, as is the custom of Royalty, she went to a performance of “The Messiah” Her advisors told her that she must not rise when the others stood at the singing of the Hallelujah Chorus. When the choir belted out, “For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth...” she stayed seated with great difficulty. But when they proclaimed the Messiah as “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” suddenly the young queen rose and stood with her head bowed, as if she would take her own crown and cast it at His feet. She had learned the lesson of the lordship of Adonai much like Abram eventually did (Illustration from David Elvery, [www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com)). By the way, do you know how President George W. Bush began the official first day of his second term on Friday morning? He started his day with his head bowed in prayer at the National Prayer Service, following a tradition begun by George Washington.

## **2. Moses rejects His Master.**

Moses also came face-to-face with Adonai. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush in Exodus 3, He did so as Yahweh (which we will study in three weeks). Moses seems to understand that God is the self-existent One but still struggles to submit to His sovereignty. God has given him an assignment and Moses doesn’t want to do it. His response is very candid in verse 10: “Moses said to the LORD [Yahweh], ‘O Lord, [Adonai] I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.’” Ken Hemphill points out that this is really a curious contradiction. Moses addresses God as Lord and acknowledges that he is a servant, “but then attempts to excuse himself from obeying his Lord based on his supposed inability” (“The Names of God,” p. 28).

In verses 11-12, the Lord responds to Moses by reminding him that since He is the Creator who made him, He can certainly put words in his mouth. Don’t you wish Moses would have just surrendered at this point? But he doesn’t. Once again, he tries to avoid obedience. He’s acting more like a cat than a dog. Look at verse 13: “But Moses said, ‘O Lord, [Adonai] please send someone else to do it.’” God’s anger then burns against Moses because on the one hand, he confesses Him as Lord, but on the other, he contradicts this confession with his lack of obedience. We do the same thing, don’t we? We call Him Lord and live the way we want. God will not tolerate this. Jesus put it this way in Luke 6:46: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” Friends, if we affirm His ownership, than we better obey Adonai.

3. David is devoted to Adonai. One of the most frequent names used by David for God is the name Adonai. In 2 Samuel 7:18-20, it appears four times and is translated “Sovereign” in the NIV: “Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, O Sovereign LORD, you have also spoken about the future of the

house of your servant. Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign LORD? 'What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Sovereign LORD.'" David recognizes God's Sovereignty and his role as a servant. Even though he is king, he acknowledges that Adonai owns everything and as a result he must obey Him. David understands the awesome power of Adonai when he writes in Psalm 114:7: "Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord..."

#### **4. Daniel addresses Adonai in confession.**

In Daniel 9, we come to a chapter of contrite confession, where Daniel addresses Adonai ten times in seventeen verses. He owns up to the fact that he and his people have not been serving the Sovereign Lord and instead have been selfishly serving their own interests. They were more like cats than dogs. Notice verse 19: "O Lord, [Adonai] listen! O Lord, [Adonai] forgive! O Lord, [Adonai] hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."

In the Old Testament, those who called on Adonai were acknowledging His right to reign supreme and the resultant responsibility all believers have to serve the Sovereign Lord. Since God owns everything, I must obey Him. If we're going to call Him Lord, than we better be living for Him.

#### **"Lord" in the New Testament**

The meaning of Adonai as Sovereign Lord is carried over into the New Testament and is used of Jesus with the Greek word kurios no less than 747 times. In the Book of Acts, Jesus is referred to as Lord 92 times, while He's called Savior just twice. I'm afraid that in the evangelical church we've overemphasized His role as Savior at the expense of His Lordship. Actually, we've often created a false dichotomy by saying that someone can accept Jesus as Savior and not submit to Him as Lord. In order to help us understand the centrality of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, I'm going to lean on some insights I've gleaned from John MacArthur's book called, "The Gospel According to Jesus" (Zondervan, 1988).

Let's chew on some verses.

- Acts 2:21: "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
- Acts 2:36: "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."
- Acts 16:31: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved-you and your household."
- Romans 10:9: "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

The Lordship of Jesus Christ means that He has dominion, authority, sovereignty and the right to rule over His creation, including you and me.

MacArthur spends some time discussing the common phrase, "Making Christ Lord" of our lives: "Jesus is Lord of all, and the biblical mandate for both sinners and saints is not to 'make' Christ Lord, but rather to bow to His lordship" (page 203). In Matthew 7:21-23<sup>+</sup>, Jesus Himself says that a verbal use of "Lord" is not enough: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Grace is not cheap and we must resist the urge to spread the gospel of **easy believism**.<sup>+</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor who was surrounded by lukewarm church leaders and cultural Christians who supported Hitler. He was imprisoned for his faith and while in prison he wrote these words: "Christianity without discipleship is Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth...there is trust in God, but no following of Christ...If we would follow Jesus we must take certain definite steps. The first step, which follows the call, cuts the disciple off from his previous existence" ("Cost of Discipleship," pages 64, 66).

I'd like to suggest some steps we can take right now because it's certainly easier to call Him Creator (Elohim) than it is to accept Him as Adonai and live under His Lordship.

#### **1. Serve sacrificially.**

Are you holding back in any way? Do you just serve when it's convenient? It's time to give your all to Adonai because He has given His all for you. Remember the words of Joshua, who didn't care if others decided to live for the Lord or not: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). If you're not in a ministry right now, determine to find one and begin serving.

#### **2. Watch your words.**

Be careful about using the name "Lord" if you're not interested in obeying Him. The very mention of His name should cause us to shudder if we're serving our own interests. Some of us "overuse" His name even when we pray. Remember, to call Him Lord means

that we are serious about living in light of His Lordship. See if these words challenge you like they do me ([www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)):

Ye call Me Light and see me not, Ye call Me way and follow me not, Ye call Me Life and desire me not, Ye call Me wise and acknowledge me not, Ye call Me fair and love me not, Ye call Me rich and ask me not, Ye call Me eternal and seek me not, Ye call Me gracious and trust me not, Ye call Me Noble and serve me not, Ye call Me mighty and honor me not, Ye call Me just and fear me not,

Ye call Me Master and obey me not, If I condemn you, blame me not.

### **3. Give generously.**

One of the best ways to remind yourself that you belong to the Lord is to make sure He is Master over your money. Some of us are not fully devoted in our discipleship because frankly we're more committed to cash than we are to Christ. Jesus stated in Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." It's an impossibility to adore Adonai and be devoted to dollars. Augustine once said, "Jesus Christ is not valued at all until He is valued above all."

Let me make a suggestion. If you're not experiencing the joy of tithing at least 10 percent of your income to kingdom purposes, may I encourage you to take God up on His challenge? Because He knows how difficult it is for us to give, He actually tells us to put Him to the test in Malachi 3:10: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'" Take the tithing challenge and you will experience innumerable blessings, and even more than that, you will grow in your love for the Lord and bring glory to God. We will then learn that we give not to get blessings but to grow in our love for the Giver of those blessings.

Thanks so much for your generous giving this past year! Let me mention three areas that you may want to direct your giving to this coming year.

As you give to the General Fund each week, we'll be able to continue our present ministries and hire an Executive Pastor sometime before the summer.

As you give to Pontiac Christian School as a "Partner in Education," we'll be able to continue discipling and educating students for Christ.

A third way to direct your giving is to the Family Life Center. We now owe less than \$200,000 and it's my prayer that we will be able to pay this all off soon so we can begin plans for a new worship center.

### **4. Surrender to His Sovereignty.**

The litmus test in determining if you are following Adonai is to ask yourself these questions: "Have I surrendered everything to Him?" "Since He owns everything, am I obeying Him?" "Am I a devoted dog or a cranky cat?" Imagine that I want to purchase an expensive pearl. Here's how the dialog might go between me and the seller (adapted from David Elvery, [www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com)).

Buyer: "I want this pearl. How much is it?" Seller: "Well, it's very expensive." Buyer: "But, how much?" Seller: "Well, a very large amount." Buyer: "Do you think I could buy it?" Seller: "Oh, of course, everyone can buy it." Buyer: "But, didn't you say it was very expensive?" Seller: "Yes." Buyer: "Well, how much is it?" Seller: "Everything you have," says the seller. Buyer: (Thinking for a while and then making up my mind) "All right, I'll buy it."

Seller: "Well, what do you have? Let's write it down." Buyer: "Well, I have ten thousand dollars in the bank." Seller: "Good--ten thousand dollars. What else?" Buyer: "That's all. That's all I have. Well ... I have a few dollars here in my pocket." Seller: "How much?" Buyer: "Well, let's see--thirty, forty, sixty, eighty, a hundred dollars." Seller: "That's fine. What else do you have?" Buyer: "Well, nothing. That's all." Seller: "Where do you live?" Buyer: "In my house. Yes, I have a house." Seller: "The house, too, then." Buyer: "You mean I have to live in my camper?" Seller: "You have a camper? I'll take that, too. What else?" Buyer: "But I'll have to sleep in my car!" Seller: "You have a car?" Buyer: "Three of them." Seller: "They become mine. What else?" Buyer: "Well, you already have my money, my house, my camper, my cars. What more do you want?" Seller: "Are you alone in this world?" Buyer: "No I have a wife and four daughters..." Seller: "Oh, yes, your wife and daughters, too. What else?" Buyer: "I have nothing left! I am left alone now." Seller: Suddenly the seller exclaims, "Oh, I almost forgot! You yourself, too! Everything becomes mine--wife, children, house, money, cars--and you too." After the seller pauses for a bit, he concludes: "Now listen--I will allow you to use all these things for the time being. But don't forget that they are mine, just as you are. And whenever I need any of them you must give

them up, because now I am the owner.”

It was Abraham Kuyper who said, “There is not an inch of any sphere of life of which Jesus Christ the Lord does not say, ‘Mine.’” Jesus is Lord and everything I have belongs to Him. Have you ever surrendered completely to Him? Are you afraid to give yourself fully to Adonai? I love what Andrew Murray said in this regard: “God is ready to assume full responsibility for the life wholly yielded to Him.” God is ready...are you?

I want to close this morning by asking you to do something. God calls Himself Sovereign and owns everything, including you and me, and we are called to be servants. If you're ready to give everything to Him, I want you to just bow your head. While you're doing that, would you also take your hands and form a fist? If you're ready to give Him everything, will you now slowly open your fists to indicate that you are surrendered before Him and that you will serve Him with everything you've got?

Let's pray now to Adonai.

Psalm 16:2 says, “You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.” That's the confession of our hearts today. You are Lord and we are not. You are owner of everything; we are but managers of what you've given to us. You are Sovereign; we are servants. We are your possession; therefore we live in submission to you. Do with us what you may and what you must in order to make us more like your Son that we might serve you more fully this day and forevermore. Amen.

#### Related Resource:

- [Adonai - My Lord, My Master](#)

## God Our Peace Jehovah Shalom

by Brian Bill

Scripture: Judges 6:24

Summary: He is Jehovah Shalom, the God of Peace.

In the Hobbit, which is Tolkien's prequel to the Lord of the Rings trilogy, Bilbo Baggins and his friends finally find the riches they were searching for and “talked delightedly of the recovery of their treasure.” But then, almost immediately, the cold dark mountain began to rumble because Smaug, the evil dragon, had now been provoked. Tolkien perceptively adds this line: “It does not do to leave a dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him” (NY: Ballantine Books, 1982, Pages 214-215). In his book called, “The Pressure's Off,” Larry Crabb reminds us that we live near a three-headed dragon. The world is around us, the devil prowls toward us, and the flesh lies within us (Page 61). It's no wonder why so many of us are out of whack. We're surrounded by the woes of the world, Satan continuously plans sneak attacks against us, and we're saturated with our own sinfulness. All of that can create a kind of perpetual chaos in our lives, where we feel pressure, stress, conflict, fear, guilt and even shame. G.K. Chesterton was right when he said, “Whatever else is or is not true, this one thing is certain—man is not what he was meant to be.”

Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, the human race has not been what it was meant to be. Sometimes it's because we have let too much of the world in; other times it's because we've given in to the devil; and other times we're simply done in by our propensity to sin. Or, it's simply circumstances that cave in on us. Turn with me to the Book of Judges. This book chronicles a very tough time in the history of Israel. Judges 2:18-19 summarizes their spiritual situation: “Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.”

The very last phrase of this book gives us insight into why things were going south for them: “...everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 21:25). And because of that, on seven different occasions we read of God's people cycling through a period of rebellion which led to retribution from God. After suffering for some time, they would eventually repent and then be restored to a time of rest and peace. But then they'd begin the process all over again. This diagram of their dilemma may be helpful (from the Ryrie Study Bible):

Let's look at four ways we can break out of this same cycle from Judges 6.

#### 1. Recognize your woes (Judges 6:1-5).

It was during one of these all-too-common episodes that God called Gideon on the scene. We find the nation of Israel, in typical fashion, having turned their backs on God once again. After a time of prosperity, the people had gotten proud and then pushed God away. That happens in our lives too, doesn't it? We receive a few blessings, and then we start to drift away from our spiritual moorings. Our church attendance becomes spotty, we slow down in our serving, and we end up becoming selfish with our time, talents, and treasures.

Verse 1 tells us that because they did evil in the eyes of the Lord, a dragon was unleashed in the form of the mighty Midianites. They were extremely powerful and oppressed the Israelites mercilessly. The name Midian means "strife." Because things were so bad, God's people had left their homes and were living in holes in the ground, fearing for their lives. They had no peace at all; in fact, they were falling to pieces. The Midianites were nomadic people, and would invade Israel every year at harvest time. Verse 5 mentions that they would come in like locusts and would ravage the land. As a result, God's people were stressed out and were living in fear.

The first step to healing and wholeness is always to admit your situation before God. Are you in a mess, in distress, or living with stress? If so, put your woes into words.

## **2. Request What You Want (Judges 6:6).**

Finally, after seven long years, the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help: "Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help." It's beyond me why they would linger this long before turning back to God. It's as if they waited until they couldn't take it any longer. Does that sound familiar? We know God is trying to get our attention but we hold out, thinking that we can handle it on our own. Even when God allows bad stuff to percolate through the pores of our life, we often refuse to repent and return to Him. Friend, God wants to use the tough things you are going through right now in order to get your attention!

Has it been awhile since you've cried out for help? It's time to turn to the only one who can help you.

## **3. Receive His Word (Judges 6:7-21).**

I love Judges 6:7 because it shows that when we cry out to God, He will respond. In this case, He sends an unnamed prophet to remind them of their history and heritage and then he delivers the message that God expects total surrender and full devotion in Judges 6:10: "I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites...but you have not listened to me." While God wants us to ask for help, He wants us to receive His Word, even if it hurts. This prophet is used by God to get them to see the depths of their depravity. Their main problem was that they had totally forgotten God...and they needed to admit that.

I love what happens next. Gideon was threshing some wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. The Hebrew word used here expresses the idea of hiding. A winepress was made out of stone and was built underground. When someone would thresh wheat they'd normally do it out in the open so that the wind could blow away the chaff. But Gideon is afraid of the Midianites and so he's whacking the wheat with a stick in an underground bunker, which may have looked like the hole Sadaam Hussein was hiding in before his capture. The mighty Gideon is a hero in hiding. He's defeated and discouraged, filled with doubts and fears. He's afraid of what was "out there" and he was also terrified "in here" (inside him).

Judges 6:12 tells us that the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." This time God doesn't send a prophet, or even an understudy angel; He sends the "Angel of the Lord," which most commentators believe is the preincarnate Christ! By the way, in the Hebrew, this phrase, "The Lord is with you" is the root to the name "Immanuel," God with us, which was the name used for Jesus in Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23.

After being called a mighty warrior, Gideon questions God out loud, wondering why a bunch of bad things have happened to his people. Verse 14 reveals that God "turned to him," which literally means that He rotated, looked at Gideon and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" Gideon responds by saying that his resume isn't very impressive. He comes from the smallest tribe, the weakest link in his clan, and he's the youngest in his family.

God confirms His priorities with His presence in Judges 6:16, "I will be with you." Gideon is given a commission but is also promised the companionship of Immanuel. By the way, did you notice that God never answered Gideon's questions? That could be because the answer was obvious, or more likely it's because Gideon's obedience is more important. What a good reminder for us. We often pepper heaven with our complaints and our questions while we cross our arms and do nothing. How dare we demand answers from God when we won't even do what He has already revealed to us.

Gideon then has the gall to ask for the first of several signs just to be sure. He wants the Lord to wait for a few minutes while he runs off and bakes some bread and throws a goat on the grill. The meal is placed on a rock as an offering for the angel and then is consumed by God's holy flames. With the divine fire of acceptance falling upon Gideon's offering, he responds the only way he can...in worship.

#### **4. Respond in Worship.**

When Gideon realizes that He is in the presence of the Almighty, he cries out in Judges 6:22: "Ah, Sovereign Lord!" He is using the names Adonai and Yahweh. He has finally come to the point of submitting to the Sovereign LORD. But now Gideon is very nervous because he realizes that he has been in the presence of God himself and he's afraid that he will be struck dead. The words of Exodus 33:20 are probably ringing in his ears: "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

In Judges 6:23, the LORD said to him (notice now that it is the LORD, not the Angel of the LORD), "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." I think we underestimate the impact these words had on Gideon. He and his people had not known peace for seven long years. They were all afraid and worried about dying every day. And now Gideon had casually conversed with Adonai Yahweh, daring to question and complain to the King of Heaven. God could rightly vaporize him just like he did to the meat and the bread in Judges 6:21. But the Lord instead pronounced peace. Gideon was about to experience peace with God, with himself, and with others.

Don't miss this. To a man who had not known peace in a long time, this was the premiere promise. He was bursting with joy because of this blessing and therefore he wanted to mark the occasion so he would never forget. Look at Judges 6:24: "So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace..." This is the first, and as far as I can tell, the only time that we see this combination of names: Jehovah Shalom. The Great I Am is Perfect Peace. This is the third name of God in our series. God is Elohim, the Creator of All. He is Adonai, the Lord of All. And He is Jehovah Shalom, the God of Peace.

#### **The Significance of Shalom**

The Lord said shalom to Gideon when He could have shamed him. Gideon in turn, had his whole view of God changed so he made a memorial to Jehovah Shalom. You've no doubt heard the word "shalom" before because it's probably the most well-known Hebrew word, but for many of us, we don't fully understand the depth of its meaning.

Since there is no single English word that communicates the richness of Shalom, we need to study some synonyms to grasp the broad spectrum of its meaning. The general idea is of completion and fulfillment and brings with it the sense of wholeness and harmony in relationships, especially with God. For Gideon to hear shalom from God meant that he was at harmony with the Holy One. Shalom also signifies a sense of well-being on the inside, and on the outside, and is used to describe health, happiness, quietness of soul, tranquility, prosperity and security. Isaiah pictures this beautifully in Isaiah 48:18: "If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river..."

Shalom is used as both a greeting and for a goodbye and everything in between. It is the best blessing of one's life and is the apex of the great high priestly benediction in Numbers 6:24-26: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."

#### **Jehovah Shalom Slays the 3-Headed Dragon**

Peace is ultimately wrapped up in a Person and is fully realized in the coming of Christ who came to share shalom with us. John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." The peace that the Prince of Peace provides is far different than anything we can find in the world. Warren Wiersbe points out that the world bases its peace on its resources, while God's peace depends on a relationship.

In fact, in John 16:33 Jesus said that the world will actually be against us: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Jesus taught that peace is found in Him alone. And through the Savior the 3-Headed Dragon of Disobedience, Distress and Discord can be slain.

#### **1. The Dragon of Disobedience.**

The Bible is clear that we are in conflict with God because of our sin. Ephesians 2:3 declares that we are actually "objects of God's wrath." Mankind has always been at odds with the Almighty, ever since Adam and Eve decided to disobey. We were at war with Him, that is, until Jesus came to bring peace. Isaiah 53:5 tells us very clearly why Jesus went through what He did: "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." Did you catch that? He was punished in order to bring us into a relationship of peace with Jehovah Shalom.

If you have not yet appropriated what Jesus did on the Cross, I have some bad news for you. Scripture says that you will never find peace. Isaiah 57:20-21: "But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'" You won't be at rest until you receive the Redeemer. You'll be cast to and fro by the waves of life and you'll be stuck in the mud and mire of sin.

That's the bad news. Now let me give you the good news. Luke 1:79 declares that Jesus would "guide our feet into the path of



peace.” When He was born the heavenly host proclaimed that He would bring “peace to men on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14).

According to Romans 5:1, when we put our faith in Christ, we are justified and “have peace with God...” Colossians 1:20 says that Jesus made “peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” The Greek word for peace means to “join together and to bind what is broken.” Jesus longs to put what is broken back together.

Are you at peace with God right now? Don’t put it off because you may not have another chance. Perhaps you’ve seen the bumper sticker that says: “No God, no peace; Know God, know peace. Properly understood, the New Geneva Study Bible says that “shalom is the symphony of life made meaningful through a right relationship with God.” Don’t you want Jehovah Shalom to look at you, like he did to Gideon, and say, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.” If you want to be at peace with God, and have Him slay the dragon of disobedience, then turn to Him and say something like this: “Elohim, Adonai, and Jehovah Shalom. You have created me but I have not been allowing you to be Lord of my life. I am not at peace because I am a sinner. I confess that I’m tossed to and fro and right now I repent of the way I’ve been living. Thank you for making a way for me to be at peace with you through the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross. I gratefully receive what you’ve done for me and by faith I ask you to forgive me for my sins.

Gideon built an altar to memorialize his encounter with Jehovah Shalom. If you decided today to receive your pardon from God that brings peace, I encourage you to do something to put it in your memory so you will never forget. You may want to tell a friend or write it down or come up and tell me after the service.

## **2. The Dragon of Distress.**

Many of you have already made sure that the first dragon was slain in your life when you were born again. Guess what? It’s still possible to live in disobedience and therefore be in distress as a Christian, isn’t it? If you’re in a sin cycle right now, cry out like Gideon did by:

- Recognizing your woes
- Requesting what you want
- Receiving His Word
- Responding in worship

Now, let’s admit something. You might not be living in gross sin but you’re in distress because you’re worried about something. Or maybe you’re filled with anxiety about the future. I came across a survey that was done by Walter Cavert in which he discovered that only 8% of the things people worry about are legitimate matters of concern. Listen to this. The other 92% were either imaginary, never happened, or involved matters over which people have no control.

I think all of us would admit that we waste a lot of time in worry. And yet, it can paralyze us. The Greek word for worry means “to draw in different directions and to be distracted.” I can think of at least two ways to get rid of distress.

First, identify what is torpedoing your peace, and then cry out to Jehovah Shalom in prayer and ask him to specifically slay this dragon. Give him your worries and your concerns and your anxieties and your fears. That’s what Philippians 4:6 says: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” The word for “prayer” here means to focus on the character of God by adoring His attributes and His names. Friend, when you’re fraught with worry, get alone with God and worship Him for who He is and what He goes by. It’s amazing how meditating on the magnitude of God will put even your problems into perspective. The word for “petition” refers to making specific requests. If you’re worried or anxious, tell God what it is exactly that is pulling you in different directions.

We’re told to not be anxious about anything because according to verse 5, the Lord is near. But when we do stress out, we need to purposely pray with a dose of thanksgiving and present our worries to the Lord. Then and only then, this, will we experience the inner peace we long for according to verse 7: “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” In Mark 4:39, we read how Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves and everything became “completely calm.” Jehovah Shalom can still speak these same words to our restless hearts when we’re tossed by the seas of stress and winds of worry, if we’ll but ask Him to do so.

Second, go to the Word of God and meditate on passages like Isaiah 26:3 that promote peace: “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.” The word shalom is actually used twice in this verse. God will keep us in shalom shalom when we allow His Word to work within us. Psalm 119:165: “Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.” If you’re having a hard time sleeping at night, claim the promise of Psalm 4:8: “I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.” If you’re a born again believer and sometimes worry that God is against you, claim the promise of Romans 8:1. I shared this verse with a sister just this week and it helped her a lot: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

### 3. The Dragon of Discord.

Perhaps you're at peace with God today, and for the most part, you're experiencing personal peace, but maybe you're at war with a fellow believer or a family member or a co-worker or a neighbor or a friend. Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who do the hard work of making peace in Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." James 3:18 promises a reward to those who get rid of discord: "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."

As far as you know, have you done what you can to be at peace with others? Romans 12:18: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Romans 14:19 reminds us that this is not always easy; it takes effort to extinguish animosity: "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." 2 Corinthians 13:11 seems to indicate that God's presence is somehow more real to those who pursue peace: "Be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you." And when we allow Christ to be leader of our lives, we will be disgusted by discord because we know that we are members on the same team. Colossians 3:15: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."

A father was trying to read a magazine but was bothered by his daughter who kept asking him what the United States looked like. On the back of his magazine he found a map of the country and so he tore it up into real small pieces and told her to go in the other room and put it together. He thought this would keep her busy for a long time so he could finish reading his magazine. In less than five minutes, his daughter was back with the map completely put together. He was surprised and asked her how she did it. She replied, "It was easy. On the other side of the paper is a picture of Jesus. When I got Jesus back where He belonged, then our country just came together."

As we put Jesus where He belongs in our life, our community, our church, and our world, we will come together as well. Let me close with a blessing from 2 Thessalonians 3:16: "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you." And may you know the names of God more deeply and personally as you experience Jehovah Shalom this week. Amen.

#### Related Resource:

- [Jehovah Shalom -Pt1: The LORD our Peace](#)
- [Jehovah Shalom - Pt 2](#)

## God Our Provider Jehovah Jireh

by Brian Bill

Scripture: Genesis 22:14

Summary: This morning our focus is on another name for God. He is Jehovah Jireh, God our Provider.

You may have heard about the guy who fell off a cliff and on his way down he was able to grab onto a tree branch jutting out from the face of the rock. As he hung there reviewing his options, he started yelling, "Is anyone up there?" He was surprised to hear a voice say to him, "Yes, this is God." The man was greatly relieved, and quickly stuttered, "God, can you save me?" "Of course I can, responded God." The man was really happy now and shouted out, "Great! What should I do?" The answer from the Almighty was not what he was expecting: "Let go of the branch." After a long period of silence, the man replied faintly, "Is there anyone else up there?"

We're like that man sometimes, aren't we? We want God to help us but we don't always want to do what He says. Specifically, we're not always interested in letting go of those things that we think are holding us up. It's tough to release our grip and give control of our lives to God. We kind of know that God will provide but maybe we're not really sure He'll come through for us. And so we hold on, and wonder if there is someone else who can help us.

We've been reminded in this series so far that God goes by the name of Elohim (Creator), Adonai (Lord), and Jehovah Shalom (The God of Peace). As we learn to call Him what He goes by, our knowledge and awe of the Almighty will grow and our faith will deepen. This morning our focus is on another name for God. He is Jehovah Jireh, God our Provider. We know from the Bible that God loves to meet the needs of His people. He counts every hair on our heads and he sees the sparrows that fall to the ground. And because of that, He will take care of us (Matthew 10:29-30). God provided for Daniel when he was in the den of lions, He came through for David when a piece of tiny gravel wiped out a great giant, he provided manna for the Israelites in the wilderness, he met the needs

of a widow, and he delivered Gideon from the mighty Midianites. God loves to come through for His people, but often not until they “let go.”

Perhaps the most moving and heart-wrenching account of God’s provision is found in Genesis 22. Let me give some background. Abram was called by God when he was 75 years old from the area that is now Iraq. In Genesis 12, he is told to leave what he had always known and live in a land that God would later show him. To let go of all that was familiar to him demonstrated incredible faith. God then promised him that the entire world would be blessed through his offspring. But when time passed and Sarah was still not pregnant, Abram took things into his own hands and fathered a child by his wife’s servant. He compromised then but he was also courageous when he went on a rescue mission to get his nephew Lot back from the bad guys. Abram demonstrated a lot of positive qualities like appealing with God to not destroy Sodom but we also know that twice he lied about his wife in order to protect her. Finally, after 25 years of waiting, the son of promise was born to them. When he and Sarah got the news they both started laughing, and so God gave the boy the name Isaac, which means laughter.

Abram’s name was changed to Abraham, which means “father of a multitude of nations.” Now the promises of God could be fulfilled through Isaac. I imagine that the household was filled with laughter and joy. According to Genesis 21:32-34, Abraham was even experiencing shalom with his neighbors. But God still had some things he wanted to teach Abraham.

### **1. The Promise Tested (Genesis 21:1-2).**

Look at Genesis 21:1: “Some time later God tested Abraham.” When we finish chapter 21, Isaac is still pretty young. Now he is about 15-years-old, which means Abraham is around 115. God is now ready to “test” Abraham. This word literally means “to test completely through a demonstration of stress” and was often used in the Old Testament of God testing the faith and faithfulness of His people. In a similar way the “Underwriters Laboratory” tests thousands of products, not to break them, but to demonstrate that they are good and reliable.

Later, in Deuteronomy 8:2, we read that God led His people into the desert for a specific purpose: “...To humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.” Keep in mind that God does not tempt us as Satan does; He tests us in order to bring out the best. Someone has said that “temptations often seem logical while trials seem very unreasonable.” Real faith is not believing in spite of the evidence but obeying in spite of the consequences.

Abraham had passed some tests earlier in his life and he had failed some other ones. He is about to face an extreme exam, the likes of which he had never encountered before. Don’t miss this obvious point: We are never exempt from the challenge of faith and we are never too old to be used by God. Sometimes the most trying tests come after years of following God faithfully. Abraham may have been on cruise control spiritually, but that was all about to change because God wanted to know what was in his heart. God calls out to him, “Abraham!” Like a true servant, he spontaneously replies, “Here I am.”

Abraham is ready to hear from God and probably eager to know what God’s message is. Perhaps God was going to announce another blessing or have him move to another exotic location or get him ready for a big battle. This is the seventh time that we know God has spoken to him, but this time God is going to demand something out of Abraham that will be extremely costly and exceedingly confusing: “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”

Notice the four phrases God uses – your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love. God is making it very clear who he is talking about and He is putting His finger on the fact that Isaac was everything to Abraham. And that was part of the problem because God alone should be everything to him. God was saying, “We’ve walked together for many years and now you have the son you’ve longed for. Tell me, Abraham; is this son more important to you than your relationship with me?”

The three words – take, go, sacrifice – must have taken Abraham’s breath away. Once again, Abraham is commanded to go somewhere he had never been. When Abraham had left Ur years earlier, he sacrificed his present security and now God seems to be telling him to sacrifice his future security. There was no doubt what he was being asked to do. A burnt offering was a total sacrifice, with the offering being completely consumed by fire and signified the complete dedication of the one making the sacrifice. There was no way the offering would be walking back from the altar. Total commitment will always be costly as David said in 2 Samuel 24:24: “I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.”

This was Abraham’s opportunity to demonstrate whether He loved the Lord with all his “heart, soul and strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5). I want you to notice that God gives no explanation; just an expectation that Abraham would obey this staggering command. Sometimes we are not given reasons either because God just wants us to faithfully follow Him. This was costly to Abraham and it was also confusing because “Isaac was the crucial foundation stone for the fulfillment of the promise that Abraham would become the father of many nations” (Hemphill, “Names of God,” Page 81).

### **2. The Preparation Taken (Genesis 21:3).**

When Abraham received this tough test of faith, he didn't argue with God and notice that he also didn't check with others. Not one word of objection is recorded in the entire text. Instead, he practiced immediate obedience: "Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about." Friends, delay almost always turns into disobedience. If you know what God wants you to do, and you put it off, then you are not obeying Him. James 4:17 puts it this way: "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."

Abraham obeyed immediately and he also made preparations to obey.

- He got up early
- Saddled his donkey
- Took two servants
- Got Isaac ready
- Cut wood for the offering

As someone has said, "prior preparation prevents poor performance." By being prepared Abraham couldn't get to the mountain and say, "I don't have any wood, I guess I can't make the sacrifice." In a similar way, we need to be prepared for worship. That may mean going to bed earlier on Saturday. That may mean setting your clothes out the night before so you can save time in the morning. That may mean that you get up earlier and read your Bible and pray so that your heart is ready to receive what God has for you. You may also want to arrive in the auditorium early and close your eyes for a few minutes (so you don't do it during the sermon). The players for the Super Bowl have spent countless hours preparing; shouldn't we get ourselves ready to meet with the Supreme Being?

### **3. The Persistence Typified (Genesis 21:4-6).**

When the promise to Abraham was tested, he immediately made some preparations to obey. What we see next in verses 4-6 is that he was also persistent: "On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.' Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife." The journey to Moriah covered about 50 miles and took three days to get there. Can you imagine what must have been going through Abraham's mind?

Once again, we see that Abraham was determined to obey God when he told his servants to stay with the donkey. He didn't want them to talk him out of what he knew he needed to do. This is the principle of separation. Sometimes we need to get away from those who will lead us down the wrong path. Actually, we should separate ourselves from anything that will draw our attention away from God.

Abraham has the faith to believe that both he and Isaac will return after they worship! Notice the pronouns: "We will worship...we will come back." In this first instance of the word "worship" in the Bible, we're brought up short in our weak definition of worship. At its heart, worship involves a willingness to surrender all to God, holding nothing back. It is obediently giving God what He wants and trusting Him to provide whatever we need.

Abraham has the assurance that Isaac will return with him. Think about this. Abraham is prepared to sacrifice his son, so how can he come back? Hebrews 11:17-19 fills in the blanks for us: "By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.' Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death."

It didn't make sense to sacrifice his son but he was prepared to do it because God said so. God would somehow work it out to maintain his promise to bless the world through Isaac, even if he had to raise him from the dead. What is stunning about Abraham's declaration of faith is that in the previous 21 chapters of Genesis, there is no mention of resurrection. Somehow Abraham knew that God could do this, even though it had not been done before. Abraham then took the wood and put it on Isaac's shoulders and like a condemned man he walked to the hill of sacrifice. Abraham carried the knife that must have become extremely heavy in his hand. He also brought the hot coals that would be used to start the fire that would cremate his son.

### **4. The Profession Testified (Genesis 21:7-8).**

As Abraham and Isaac walked up the mountain together, "Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied. 'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'" Oh, how these words must have sliced right through a devoted dad's heart.

Abraham then answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Notice that "God himself" will provide the sacrifice. The sacrifice will come from Him. The word "provide" is the word Jireh and has a very rich meaning. It is translated as "to see" and as "provision." God sees beforehand what it is that He will provide. Abraham knew that God would somehow see to it that everything would work out. He would be able to worship because God would provide the offering for the sacrifice.

#### **5. The Presentation Trusted (Genesis 21:9-10).**

Abraham testified that God would provide and he trusted God enough to continue to obey by presenting his son for sacrifice: "When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood."

God had a specific place in mind and when Abraham was given the location, he constructed an altar and put the wood on it. Then he took his son, tied him up and laid him on the altar. To complete his obedience, "Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son." Abraham had every intention of following through on his commitment to completely obey.

#### **6. The Provision Transacted (Genesis 21:11-14).**

With the knife hovering in the air, an angel of the Lord calls out, "Abraham! Abraham!" Once again, Abraham responds as a servant, "Here I am." Then Abraham breathes a huge sigh of relief as he hears these words: "Do not lay a hand on the boy...Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Abraham had passed the test but he still needed to complete the sacrifice and so God made provision for him in verse 13: "Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son."

God's timing is incredible, isn't it? Some shepherd lost a sheep that day and it somehow wandered over to the exact spot where Abraham could see it. Notice also that it was caught by its horns, meaning that it was not bloodied or beat up. This lamb needed to be without imperfection according to Leviticus 22:21: "it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable." Abraham went over and got the ram, killed it and lit the fire to complete his worship. According to Genesis 22:13, Abraham offered this lamb "instead of his son." The ram took the place of Isaac; it was a substitute offering.

Abraham passed the test and as a result, he called that place "The Lord will Provide." This is the name Jehovah Jireh. At just the right time, God came through for Abraham.

He is a provider and He always supplies the right thing at the right time and at the right place. He is never late but He is seldom early and He certainly does not cater to our timetable. God tests us to grow our faith, to keep us focused, and to make us fruitful.

#### **What Are You Giving Up?**

It strikes me that before we can know Jehovah Jireh, before we can experience God as Provider, we must first be willing to obey Him fully. Maybe you've never experienced God's provision because frankly you don't think you have any needs.

If you want God to provide you must be prepared for Him to do so. We don't have to fully understand in order to surrender but we do need to fully trust. It's like the story I heard of a house on fire. The little girl was trapped in her upstairs bedroom. As she leaned out the window, her father, who was on the ground said, "Jump. I'll catch you." The little girl was afraid and replied, "But, I can't see you!" To which the Father shouted, "That's OK. I can see you." She jumped to safety not because she could see but because she trusted the voice of her father who told her to jump. She was willing to let go. And it was in letting go that she was ultimately provided for.

Is there anything you're holding on to today? What is your Isaac? It may be your career. It might be a relationship or a possession. Perhaps it's your retirement or your college plans. Maybe it's a child or a parent. It's time to put it all on the altar. Shortly after I became a Christian, the Lord prompted me to take a look at how much I loved my motorcycle. It was beautiful and I took great care of it. It had a metallic blue gas tank that I kept shined and I even used an old toothbrush to scrub away any hard-to-reach grime. I thought about my bike all the time. One day I prayed out loud and said something like this: "Lord, this bike is yours. If you want me to get rid of it, I will. If you want me to keep it, I will. But it now belongs to you." Shortly after that I sensed the Lord telling me to sell it so I did. I was then able to use this money to pay for a summer school class at Moody Bible Institute.

#### **When God's work is done in God's way it will never lack God's supply**

I'm not implying that all of our possessions are bad and we should get rid of them. But I am saying that if we're not careful they can end up possessing us. Whenever we have an "Isaac" that we have lifted up, God will eventually ask that we sacrifice it because He wants us to trust in Him, not in the gifts He has given to us. Abraham was willing to praise God and give up that which was most important before he saw God's provision because he was determined to worship the Blessor, not the blessing. Trust God to provide

for your needs. When you do, you will find Him to be your Jehovah Jireh. Jesus challenged his followers to not be anxious about what they would eat, or wear, or even where they would live. If we put Him first, "all these things will be added" to us (Matthew 6:33). Hudson Taylor was famous for saying, "When God's work is done in God's way it will never lack God's supply."

Matthew Mead, in his book called, "The Almost Christian Rediscovered," asks some simple questions:

"If Jesus Christ is not worth having, why do you profess Him? If He is worth having, then why don't you hold Him tight and draw as close as you can to Him? If religion is not good, why do you profess it? If religion is good, why do you not practice it?"

Let's not be half-hearted, lukewarm believers. Let's give our all to the One who gave it all for us. God never wanted Isaac to be sacrificed physically; He wanted him to be sacrificed in Abraham's heart. Abraham was willing to sacrifice a promise and God may be asking you to give up a promise you are holding on to. When you do, He may take what you give Him, or He may give it back to you. Either way, He will be your provider and you will have settled the question of who is most important to you.

After Abraham encountered Jehovah Jireh on Mount Moriah, all of God's promises were released in his life. As Ken Hemphill states,

"Too many of us are missing the joy of seeing God's blessings fully released in our lives because we are tenaciously clinging to that which seems most precious. We argue with God that we can't possibly put our career or our family on the altar, because it is the only thing that we have of value. The problem is that we have taken possession of what God gave to us in stewardship..." (Page 90).

Call out to Jehovah Jireh by name and ask for His provision. But make sure you have first settled the issue of preeminence. Who is most significant to you? Who or what occupies first place in your heart? It's only as we sacrifice what is most important that we will discover that God is most important, and then He will provide for us in a profound way. When you go through a season of testing, remember that Jehovah sees! When your month outlasts your money, God will provide. When you're feeling overwhelmed, God will provide. When you're troubled, trust in Jehovah Jireh.

I wonder if we have the courage to pray like A.W. Tozer did:

"Father, I want to know You, but my coward heart fears to give up its toys. I cannot part with them without inward bleeding, and I do not try to hide from You the terror of the parting. I come trembling, but I do come. Please root from my heart all those things which I have cherished so long and which have become a very part of my living self, so that You may enter and dwell there without a rival. In Jesus' Name, Amen" ("Pursuit of God," Page 31).

## **Jesus Jireh**

In our closing moments, think with me about the picture behind the picture.

Isaac carried the wood on his back; Jesus bore the weight of His cross as He walked through the streets of Jerusalem on the way to a hill called Calvary.

Both Isaac and Jesus were "obedient unto death," as they quietly submitted to the will of their fathers.

Both Isaac and Jesus were "bound" in preparation for death.

Mount Moriah is where the Temple was eventually built. The very place where the blood of the ram soaked into the wood was where countless offerings of blood were presented in the Temple. Are you ready for this? Scholars tell us that Mount Moriah is another name for Calvary, the place where Jesus gave His life for our sins, where his blood stained a wooden cross.

Abraham and Isaac traveled three days to the mountain where Isaac's life was eventually spared; Jesus was buried for three days before coming back to life.

Isaac learned about a substitutionary sacrifice when the lamb was killed in his place. Likewise, Jesus as the perfect "lamb of God" gave his life for us, in our place.

God's provision is always nearby. The ram was in the thicket, close enough for Abraham to see. According to Psalm 75:1, God's name is near. All you have to do is call out to Him.

When Abraham experienced Jehovah Jireh, he made an altar so that he would remember. We've been given something to help us remember that God is the provider as well. It's called Communion. It's a table of remembrance. It's a place where we keep in mind that God has provided and will always provide. It's also a time for us to prepare to receive His provision by making sure we have surrendered everything to Him. Are you ready to let go and let God?

Please close your eyes right now and listen to these two verses from the book of Romans: "...how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17). "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

Hudson Taylor had a plaque in his room while he was a missionary in China. On it were these words: Ebenezer and Jehovah Jireh, which means, "The Lord has helped us" and "The Lord will see to it or provide." One looked back and the other looked forward. One reminded him of God's faithfulness and the other of God's provision.

Communion is a time for us to look back and thank God for how He has helped us. It's also a time for us to be reassured that God will provide for us today and tomorrow.

#### **Related Resource:**

- [Jehovah Jireh: The LORD Will Provide:](#)

## **God The Covenant Keeper Yahweh**

Brian Bill

Scripture: Exodus 3:14

Summary: Let's turn to Exodus 3 where we are introduced to the meaning, the majesty, and the mystery of the name Yahweh.

Since tomorrow is Valentine's Day, I thought I'd begin with "The Top Ten Lines" that may have been used by Adam when he courted Eve.

10. You know you're the only one for me.
9. Do you come here often?
8. Trust me, this was meant to be! (I tried this one out on Beth when we were dating – it didn't work real well!)
7. Look around, baby. All the other guys are animals!
6. I already feel like you're a part of me!
5. Honey, you were made for me!
4. You're the girl of my dreams! (See Genesis 2:21)
3. I like a woman who doesn't mind being ribbed!
2. You're the apple of my eye!
1. Why don't you come over to my place and we can name the animals?

As we've been learning in this series, a person's name as used in the Bible is often equivalent to their personality. For instance, in Hebrew the name Adam gave to Eve can be translated something like, "Wow!" The meaning behind Moses' name is "pulled out," because he was pulled out of the Nile as a baby and would later pull his people out of Egypt.

A change of name indicated a deliberate and decisive redirection in a person's life, like when Abram (exalted father) became Abraham (father of a multitude), when Sarai became Sarah (princess of a multitude), when Jacob (deceiver) became Israel (a powerful prince), when Haddassah (myrtle) was renamed Esther (star), and Saul starting going by Paul. In the Bible to know someone's name is to really know the person. Conversely, if you don't know someone's name you don't really know that individual. We could say that a person was somehow present in his or her name.

After Adam and Eve were created, God revealed Himself using different names. Adam had the authority to name the animals but only the Almighty reveals His names to His people for His purposes. These names help us understand more about God's personality and His promises. He is One and yet expresses Himself as Elohim, which means that He is the Creator and Designer of the universe. He is to be addressed as Adonai because He is Lord and Master of all. When our problems seem insurmountable, He promises His peace as Jehovah Shalom. And when we're finally ready to surrender, we will praise Him as Jehovah Jireh, and discover Him as our Provider.

In the Old Testament, to do something in “someone’s name” or to “call upon” an individual’s name was very serious business. When the Scripture directs us to call on the name of the Lord, we are inviting God to come right into our situation. We read in Genesis 4:26 that it didn’t take long in the history of mankind for people to turn to God: “At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.” This is a good spot for us to pause and point out a few things.

- Whenever you see the word LORD in all capital letters, it’s the name Yahweh.
- This name is used over 6,800 times in the Old Testament, three times more than Elohim.
- This name was considered so sacred that when scribes would write it, they would take a bath beforehand and then destroy the pen afterward.
- The Jewish people held this name in such high honor and immense awe that when they would come to it in their reading, they would not pronounce it. In fact, it was so revered that it was only said out loud once a year on the Day of Atonement, and then only by the high priest in the most holy place of the Temple.
- As a way to set this name apart from any other name, when it was written the scribes used four consonants and left out the vowels, so that people would not inadvertently take it in vain: Y\_H\_W\_H. This name is also translated as Jehovah.

## **Your God is Too Small**

Part of our problem today is that we’ve become too casual with God. Instead of hesitating to even pronounce His name, we use His name flippantly. God’s name has become part of our slang and is used more often in swearing than in supplication. Many curse His name out loud; denigrating Him by making unfair accusations, or by simply thinking too little of Him. The third commandment, found in Exodus 20:7 is a charge to not take God’s holy name in vain: “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD [Yahweh] your God, for the LORD [Yahweh] will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” We are to not treat His name as “empty” or “nothing.” Literally it means that we are to avoid “attaching to it emptiness.”

In his classic book called, “Your God is Too Small,” J.B. Phillips writes: “The trouble with many people today is that they have not found a God big enough for modern needs.” That may be because for many of us, our view of God has not changed much since we were little kids. Some of the images that we may hold include the following:

- The resident policeman who is just out to bust us for our behavior.
- The grand old man who just winks at our wrong-doing.
- The managing director who controls everything.
- The meek and mild God who is helpless to do anything about our situation.
- Pastor Jeff suggests another common idea: God as the holy vending machine.

In short, Phillips rightly suggests that we have put “God in a box” and our box is pretty small [Hold up box]. We have shrunk Him down so much that our thoughts about Him are nowhere close to what the Bible teaches. Some of us have made Him in “our image” instead of fully living out what it means to be made in “His image.” Are you ready to take God out of your box of preconceived ideas? In order to see the bigness of God, we need to understand more about what He goes by.

Let’s turn to Exodus 3 where we are introduced to the meaning, the majesty, and the mystery of the name Yahweh. The other names of God that we have studied so far were revealed to individuals in specific situations or simply stated in Scripture. This particular name comes straight from God himself, and because it does, we must approach this section with some fear and trembling. It’s my prayer that when we’re finished, we will never put God in a box again and we’ll learn that life is not primarily about who we are; but is about who God is. In other words, He is God and we are not.

## **Breaking God Out Of Your Box**

In order to grasp the greatness of God, we’re going to look at four hammers that will break God out of our boxes. Moses has been tending his father-in-law’s sheep for about 40 years after killing an Egyptian for the way he had mistreated an Israelite. God is now getting ready to call Moses to the task of leading the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt, and Moses isn’t too happy about it.

As Moses was moping around on a mountain he looked up and saw a bush that was on fire and did not burn up. He decided to go over and take a closer look. When he got to the bush, verse 4 says that God called out, “Moses! Moses!” Moses replied, “Here I am.” God then told him to come no closer and to kick off his sandals because the place where he was standing was “holy ground.” Moses not only unlaced his sandals; he also covered up his face “because he was afraid to look at God.” Jack Hayford suggests that Moses probably liked his sandals because they were pretty comfortable. God is calling him to step out of himself, to leave his comfort zone and get to know what is really important.

### **1. Yahweh is Personal (Exodus 3:7-10).**



The first thing we see about Yahweh is that while He is holy; He is highly personal. Look at Exodus 3:7-8: “The LORD [Yahweh] said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them...’” Aren’t you glad that God sees our suffering and is moved by our misery? As God hears the cries of His people He becomes very concerned about what they are going through. Moses is no doubt thrilled that God is coming down to rescue them. He’s probably thinking, “Go for it, God! Right on! It’s about time!” But then he hears God say that He is planning to mobilize Moses for the rescue effort in verse 10: “So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

## **2. Yahweh is Present (Exodus 3:11-14).**

God is not only personal, He is also present. In verse 11, Moses tries to bail on this assignment, claiming that he is just “a nobody.” He feels incapable and unworthy. In the next chapter, Moses tells God that he is not eloquent enough to speak to Pharaoh (Exodus 4:10). God responds in Exodus 3:12: “I will be with you.” Moses was mortified by what he was being asked to do but God wanted him to know that He would be with him.

Then Moses describes the absurdity of this request by conjecturing in Exodus 3:13: “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” Moses is wondering out loud why God’s people would listen to him so he’s asking God to reveal himself in a way that He had never done before. Moses wants to know God’s name. The Egyptians had numerous gods, all with names, but what does God go by? Moses knew God existed but all he knew was that He was the God of his forefathers. He needed a name, a title, something that would carry some weight with the Israelites and with Pharaoh.

It’s interesting that God doesn’t tie himself down with a name. All he tells Moses is that He is who He is. Look at Exodus 3:14: “God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” These words can be rendered, “I will be what I will be.” This name is from the Hebrew verb, “to be” and the four Hebrew consonants form the word Yahweh. The one who has preexistence is also personally present with us. He has existed in eternity past and He is present in the present.

The same God who worked through the patriarchs was speaking to Moses at that very moment. God delivered in the past and because He is who He is, He will deliver again. The One who has always been is active right now. This is fleshed out in Isaiah 43:10-11: “...so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD [Yahweh] and apart from me there is no savior.”

Over thirty years ago, Francis Schaeffer wrote a book with a title that says it all: *The God Who Is There*. Everything is dependent upon God. There is creation and there is the Creator, nothing more. And the created finds its purpose only in a relationship with the God who is there. We could turn this into a prayer using these words: “Yahweh, you have always been. You always are and You will always be because you are the God who is there. You are who you are. You are everything and anything I will ever need and I need not look elsewhere.”

## **3. Yahweh is Powerful (Exodus 3:15-20).**

In Exodus 3:15, God declares that He goes by Yahweh: “This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.” God’s name is personal and present and it is also powerful. Look at Exodus 3:19: “But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him.” Moses is not being asked go alone in his own power. He is God’s instrument and God will provide the power to accomplish what needs to be done.

In Exodus 33:18 we see that Moses has the courage to ask for a display of God’s power. He doesn’t want to worship a God who is too small and so he says: “Now show me your glory.” Moses will never be the same when Yahweh answers this bold request in verse 19: “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD [Yahweh] in your presence.” Just catching a glimpse of God will change you forever!

## **4. Yahweh is a Promise-keeper (Exodus 3:6, 15-16).**

Three different times in Exodus 3, and once at the end of chapter 2, Yahweh recounts the fact that He is a covenant-keeping God. Look at Exodus 2:24: “God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.” Exodus 3:6: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” And Exodus 3:15 and Exodus 3:16 are identical: “The LORD, [Yahweh] the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob...”

Yahweh keeps his promises because he is a covenant keeping God. The idea of a covenant is an essential teaching of Scripture. God made a covenant with Noah in Genesis 9, promising that He would never again destroy the whole world with a flood. In His

covenant with Abraham, Yahweh promised to bless his descendants through Isaac (Genesis 12:1-3). In God's covenant with David, God declared that one of David's descendants would be the royal heir to the throne (2 Samuel 7:12). This was fulfilled when Jesus, who was from the line of David, was born in the city of David.

Our culture is more familiar with contracts than with covenants. While there are some similarities, there are at least three differences. Covenants are:

1. Permanent. A covenant is a permanent arrangement; contracts have an end date.
2. Total. A contract generally involves only one aspect, while a covenant covers a person's total being.
3. Costly. The word itself provides some additional meaning as it comes from a root word which means, "To cut." This sounds strange to us, but when two parties would enter into a covenant, they would pass through an aisle with bodies of slaughtered animals on each side. The idea behind this is that if any party breaks the covenant they would be in danger of becoming just like the cut up animals. In Exodus 24:3-8, Moses sprinkled the blood from the animals on the altar and on the people to demonstrate the covenant they had entered with God.

When God makes a covenant, He keeps it. When He makes a promise, you can count on Him. Psalm 105:42: "For he remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham." Psalm 119:50: "My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life."

### **The Ultimate Box Breaker**

Yahweh is personal, He is present, He is powerful, and He keeps His promises. When we catch a glimpse of Him our view of Him should enlarge, and our worship of Him should be filled with more reverence and more rejoicing. If you really want to have your box blasted away, think with me about what Jesus said about Himself. Jesus took this majestic name of God, and as John Piper states, "Wrapped it in the humility of servanthood, offered Himself as an atonement for our rebellion, and made a way for us to see the glory of God."

As we've already established, Yahweh was an unpronounceable name for God's people.

Here's something very interesting. The rabbis taught that one of the signs that the Messiah had come would be his ability to pronounce this name. Jesus not only said this name out loud, He deliberately delineated Himself as the bearer of this name in John 8:58: "Before Abraham was born, I AM." And then on eight different occasions, Jesus used this same phrase, "I am" to define who He is and to describe what He came to do. Those who were paying attention should not have missed the obvious connection when He said: "I AM the...Bread of Life, Light of the World, Gate, Good Shepherd, Way, Vine, Alpha and Omega, Resurrection and the Life."

### **Keeping Our Covenants Today**

Friends, when we get to know what God goes by, we will revel in how personal He is, we will lean on His presence, we will experience His explosive power, and we can count on His promises. And when we enter into covenants, He expects us to keep them. Before I move on, I want to acknowledge the fact that some of you are not married and the topic of marriage brings up pain for you. Please know that you matter to God whether you are married or not, and if you are single you are not somehow second-class. Some of you want to be married, and through no fault of your own, you're not right now. Others of you may have the gift of singleness and you've been slighted by the church. I apologize to you if I've done that, or if our church has treated you poorly just because you're not married.

Thousands of churches around the country are giving attention today to the covenant of marriage. The governor of Arkansas is leading a group of more than 1,000 couples tomorrow on Valentine's Day, to convert their traditional marriage into a covenant marriage, designed to strengthen their bond spiritually and make it more difficult to separate or divorce. The Covenant Marriage movement lists these key elements, many of which come right out of our study on the names of God ([www.covenantmarriage.com](http://www.covenantmarriage.com)):

"We desire for couples to understand the purpose of marriage from God's perspective; the promise of God to be with them; the power of God to enable them; the peace of God that will sustain them; the protection of God for those who rest in Him; the provisions of God flowing through them to each other; the pleasure God desires for them to experience as a couple; and finally, the perseverance God provides to keep them moving forward."

Since we've established that Yahweh is the covenant-keeping God, I want to encourage those of you who are married to renew your covenant to your spouse and to your God. Malachi 2:14+ refers to marriage as a "covenant" between one man and one woman for life. If you're not married, and you're living with someone who is not your spouse, honor Yahweh by separating until you are ready to make an unconditional covenantal commitment. I realize that our culture believes differently on this and you may even think that God is just a killjoy. Remember this. God wants what is best for you and He has designed marriage to be the place reserved for physical intimacy. Perhaps you think that it's cheaper to live together -- and it might be in the short term. But it actually is more costly in other

ways. To follow God's way always involves a cost, but it's worth it.

I want to introduce you to a young couple that is seeking after God's own heart. They are committed to exceed the norm, to go above the average relationship, and establish a marriage that will stand the test of time. Their story is raw and real and full of hope for anyone who is hurting today.

[Marty and Kristy Cotter Testimony]

Several months ago, Marty and Kristy asked me to help them renew their vows before their covenant God and in front of their committed congregation. If you're married, I don't want to put any pressure on you, but if you feel so led, maybe you could hold your spouse's hand and make these words your own. Marty, believing that marriage is a covenant intended by God to be a lifelong fruitful relationship between a man and a woman, do you vow to God, to Kristy, and to your church family, to remain steadfast in selfless, unconditional love for her and will you always seek reconciliation in times of trial? [I do] Will you repeat after me? "I, Marty, renew my covenant of marriage with you, Kristy. I promise always to love you as my wife and to completely give myself and all that I have to you. I pledge to care for you in sickness or in health. I will honor and cherish you all the days of my life, whether our life circumstances are better or worse, richer or poorer. I will strive to live before you a life of faith and trust in Jesus Christ." Kristy, believing that marriage is a covenant intended by God to be a lifelong fruitful relationship between a man and a woman, do you vow to God, to Marty, and to your church family, to remain steadfast in selfless, unconditional love for him and will you always seek reconciliation in times of trial? [I do] Will you repeat after me? "I, Kristy, renew my covenant of marriage with you, Marty. I promise always to love you as my husband and to completely give myself and all that I have to you. I pledge to care for you in sickness or in health. I will honor and cherish you all the days of my life, whether our life circumstances are better or worse, richer or poorer. I will strive to live before you a life of faith and trust in Jesus Christ."

Yahweh promises to be there for us because He is personal, present, powerful, and a promise-keeper. Pastor Jeff and Maxine are going to close our service with a song that expresses the marriage covenant, and reminds us the God who is there will always be here.

Closing Song: "[I Will Be There](#)"

**Related Resource:**

- [Jehovah \(Yahweh\)](#)

## God The Almighty El Shaddai

Brian Bill

Scripture: Genesis 17:1

Summary: When the two words are put together, El Shaddai means the "One mighty to nourish and satisfy."

A week ago yesterday I was overwhelmed by an ocean of orange as Beth and I were invited to the Wisconsin/Illinois game. I was decked out in a red hat with a big white "W" emblazoned on it and wore a Bucky Badger shirt. As I looked around Assembly Hall I only saw about five others wearing the colors of heaven, and one was my wife! The worst part of the whole experience wasn't the ugly orange, or even the looks I got from the other fans, it was hearing a never ending mantra from one end of the stadium to the other. It would start on one side with the crowd spelling out the word I-L-L. This was followed by the fans around me shouting back, "So Am I." Actually, I think they were trying to say, I-N-I, but it sure sounded like "So Am I." I know I felt ill when the Badgers bombed out at the end of the game.

We hear slogans and phrases all the time. And some of them even sound spiritual.

Money is the root of all evil. Actually, 1 Timothy 6:10 says that the "...Love of money is a root of all kinds of evil..."

God wants you to be happy. I hear this one a lot. It's often used for justification to get out of something that is right or to start doing something that is wrong. God never says he wants us to be "happy." His heart is for us to be "holy" as stated in 1 Peter 1:15: "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do."

God helps those who help themselves. This one is quoted a lot and is sometimes even attributed to the Bible. It's not only extra-biblical, it's also unbiblical. In fact, Jeremiah 17:5 says, "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD" and Proverbs 28:26 states: "He who trusts in himself is a fool..."

Over time our mantras can become meaningless and our spiritual slogans can leave us feeling empty. As we come to the sixth name in our series, "What God Goes By," we will see God as El Shaddai at the moment we realize that we are not happy and when we admit we are helpless. Let me suggest a phrase to focus on: When we are empty, God is enough! This is similar to what John Piper often says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."

The different names of God are like a multifaceted diamond. Each one reveals more about His beautiful character and tremendous worth. As we unpack these names we can't help but revere Him more devotedly and rejoice in Him more deeply.

1. Elohim Creator
2. Adonai Lord
3. Jehovah Shalom God our Peace
4. Jehovah Jireh God our Provider
5. Yahweh God the Covenant Keeper

The first part of this compound name El is the word for God and means "mighty and powerful." We see this in Psalm 68:35: "You are awesome, O God [El], in your sanctuary; the God [El] of Israel gives power and strength to his people." While there is some difference of opinion regarding the primary meaning of Shaddai, and it is often translated as Almighty because it can also stand for a mighty mountain. The word actually has a more tender definition. The root shad is connected to the nurturing relationship a mother has with her infant child and signifies one who "nourishes and satisfies."

When the two words are put together, El Shaddai means the "One mighty to nourish and satisfy." God pours out His provision because He is all-powerful. The ancient rabbis referred to Him as the "all-sufficient One." The early church made sure this name was right out front in the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty..." When we admit our insufficiency, the Almighty is sufficient to meet all our needs. When we are empty, God is enough!

### **The Demonstration of El Shaddai**

We're going to look at how three individuals came face-to-face with El Shaddai when they were at the end of their ropes. All three were empty in some way before they discovered that God alone is enough.

#### **1. Abraham was burdened (Genesis 17:1).**

This name for God is used 48 times in the Old Testament. The first instance of El Shaddai is found in Genesis 17:1: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty [El Shaddai]; walk before me and be blameless.'" We've dug into Abraham's life several times during this series so we won't spend much time on him this morning but I do want to point out that he must have been carrying a pretty heavy burden for quite some time. God had made several promises to him – of land, descendants, and blessings – and yet, he waited a long time before they came to pass. When it appeared that God wasn't going to come through, Abraham even tried to take things into his own hands. Thirteen years later, God speaks to him again, and this time reveals himself as El Shaddai.

Abraham had given up all hope of having a son with his wife Sarah, but it was at the point of his insufficiency that he discovered the sufficiency of Almighty God. God is able to do much more than is humanly possible. This is stated clearly in Genesis 18:14 when God declares: "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" Jeremiah captures the unlimited power of the Almighty when he writes in Jeremiah 32:17: "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you." Do you feel burdened today? Have you been relying upon your own efforts only to sink to your knees or fall on your face? Have you been struggling with patience? If so, get to know El Shaddai, and as Abraham was instructed, "Walk before Him" wholeheartedly. When Abraham realized his emptiness He rejoiced that God was enough, and that literally changed the trajectory of his life.

#### **2. Naomi was bitter (Ruth 1:20-21).**

Abraham was burdened and Naomi was bitter. We read in Ruth 1:1 that because there was a bad famine in Bethlehem, an Israelite named Elimelech took his wife Naomi and their two sons to live in the country of Moab. Their two sons married Moabite women, one who was named Orpah, and the other Ruth. During their stay in Moab, Naomi's husband died and then about ten years later, both of her sons also die. As a result, Naomi, Orpah and Ruth are now widows. Widows in the ancient world had no social status and no economic means to survive. This would especially be true for Naomi, since she was an Israelite living in a foreign country.

Naomi tells her two daughters-in-law to leave her and go back home. Orpah decides to leave but Ruth determines to stay with Naomi. Both of them then make the long journey back to Bethlehem, where Naomi is recognized by some of the women who ask out loud in verse 19: "Can this be Naomi?" My guess is that she looked a lot different from the day she left. Her face was probably weathered, her shoulders were slumped and her eyes were no doubt filled with the pain of losing a husband and two sons.

Notice how Naomi responds to their question in verses 20-21: "'Don't call me Naomi,' she told them. 'Call me Mara, because the Almighty [Shaddai] has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty [Shaddai] has brought misfortune upon me.'" The name "Naomi" means pleasant; and "Mara" means bitter. Naomi recognizes that her problems come from the Lord. Four times in these two verses she attributes her affliction to the Almighty:

- The Almighty
- has made my life very bitter.
- The Lord has brought me back empty.
- The Lord has afflicted me.
- The Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.

This is similar to another godly woman's response when she was not able to have children. In 1 Samuel 1, the phrase: "And the Lord had closed her womb" is repeated twice. This is one of the hardest lessons we will ever learn. Our problems are given to us by the Lord Himself. It is God who is behind the circumstances of life. We'd rather blame it all on Satan, or on someone else. But it is God who allows good things and bad things to come into our lives. God is in charge and as such we should remember Ecclesiastes 7:14: "When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other."

Some of you have had to face the bewildering loss of a spouse, a child, or a parent. I can't identify with your pain, but God can. Perhaps you feel like Naomi did when she wanted her name changed to Mara because you feel marred by what has happened to you. As painful as what you are experiencing is, don't lose sight of the fact that Naomi's emptiness eventually allowed her to adore the Almighty. She was bitter but got better because when she was empty she came to the place of knowing that God is enough! Naomi was willing to entrust her pain and bitterness to El Shaddai, believing that He would come through for her, even if all her questions remained unanswered. Somehow God was providentially weaving His purposes through her problems and her pain.

In the midst of her bitterness, she continued to walk with God, even when her two sons married Moabites. She worshiped the true God when the entire culture bowed to Baal. She made the most of her situation by teaching Ruth about God. She had the courage to return to her land and later boldly told Ruth to make a marriage proposal to Boaz. She launched her matchmaking arrangement but she also knew how to be patient and wait on the Lord as she said in 3:18, "Be patient, my daughter, until we see what happens."

She submitted to God's sovereign plan and eventually had the joy of nurturing a baby boy named Obed, who became the grandfather of King David. Imagine that scene from Ruth 3:16: "Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap, and cared for him." That's a picture of how El Shaddai can meet us at our point of bitterness and make us better. He is the powerful God who nourishes and satisfies His children, but not until they admit their emptiness. It's when we are empty that we can see that God is enough!

### **3. Job was broken.**

Sometimes we're burdened because we think God is not going to come through for us. Other times we're bitter because things have not worked out like we want. On occasion, we're completely broken because everything has been taken from us. That's what happened to Job. Interestingly, of the 48 occurrence of El Shaddai in the Old Testament, 31 of them are found in the Book of Job.

This book begins very simply but with incredible speed as Job's brokenness comes about very quickly. The opening verses serve as an introduction and give us three truths about Job (special thanks to Ray Pritchard for these points).

He was righteous. We see this in Job 1:1: "This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil."

He was rich. In Job 1:2-3 we read that "He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East."

He was religious. In verse 4 we discover that Job "sacrificed a burnt offering" for each of his children and we read that this was his "regular custom."

By the world's standards, Job was successful and by God's standards he was a spiritual man. And then Satan receives God's permission to put Job to the test. Job's brokenness comes as a result of four big bombshells. First, his livestock is stolen and his

servants are killed. Second, a fire “from God” destroys his sheep. Third, his camels are confiscated. The fourth messenger of misfortune follows quickly on the heels of the other three when all of his children are killed. In the space of a few minutes, Job lost everything that was dear to him. It was bad and then it got worse and then it got terrible and then it became unbearable. This all left him broken...and then his health was taken from him as well. On top of that, he had to listen to the advice of “friends” who were more like enemies to him.

In Job 1:20-21, Job’s initial response is to weep: “He got up and tore his robe and shaved his head.” But he also does something else that is not very common. When faced with all that had happened, Job also worshipped: “Then he fell to the ground in worship... The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.” His emptiness caused him to exclaim that God is enough. In the midst of his pain, he is able to praise God. He does two things: he weeps and he worships. But he also does not do something in verse 22: “In all this Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.” He refused to say God was wrong! What a good corrective for us.

After leaving chapter one, Job enters another test when he is afflicted with sores and his body begins to break down. He receives another blow and is broken further when his bride urges him to bail on God in Job 2:9: “Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!” Job’s response shows that he understands the character of God when he says, “Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?”

Don’t miss the significance of why the name El Shaddai is used more in the Book of Job than in any other book. As we have established, when we are most empty, God is most evident. Maude Royden has said, “When you have nothing left but God, then you become aware that God is enough.” Let’s do a brief survey of how El Shaddai is referenced several times in the remainder of this book.

- Job 5:17: “Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.” [El Shaddai]
- Job 6:4: “The arrows of the Almighty [El Shaddai] are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God’s terrors are marshaled against me.”
- Job 6:14: “A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.” [El Shaddai] Job is doing a “push-back” here, as he wonders why his friends are so tough on him and so quick to judge. Have you noticed how when someone is down, others tend to pile on?
- In Job 13:3, Job tells his buddies that he is going directly to El Shaddai with his concerns, and that he doesn’t need them to needlessly needle him: “But I desire to speak to the Almighty [El Shaddai] and to argue my case with God.”
- In Job 22:25, one of his friends seems to finally get it: “Surely you will find delight in the Almighty.” [El Shaddai]

Job wants desperately to hear from God and so he cries out in Job 31:35: “Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense-let the Almighty [El Shaddai] answer me.”

Job begged God to answer his questions. He desperately wanted to know why all these bad things were happening to him. God answered him, but the answer was not what Job expected. Instead of giving a direct response, God gave His longest speech in the entire Bible in Job 38-41. He asks Job questions like, “Where were you when I established the heavens and the earth? Can you place the stars in the sky? Do you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck with a flowing mane? Will the one who contends with the Almighty [El Shaddai] correct Him?”

Sometimes we blast away at God when we’re broken. When we come with that kind of attitude God asks the same question to us that he asked Job in Job 40:8: “Would you condemn me to justify yourself?” Job, after getting a theology lesson, broke down and said in Job 42:3, 5: “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know...My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you...therefore I repent in dust and ashes.” God is in the business of fixing broken people. He is enough when we don’t have enough. El Shaddai is more than adequate when we feel totally inadequate.

Ultimately the only answer God gave to Job was Himself. It was if El Shaddai said to him, “Job, I am your answer. Learn who I am. When you know me, you’ll know how to handle anything.” Job wasn’t asked to trust a plan but a person -- a personal God who is in ultimate control and knows what is best for us. This has been called the first rule of the Christian life: He is God, and we are not.

The main point of the book of Job is that life is unfair, that bad things do happen. The one great biblical purpose for trials is to draw you near to God. The question is not, “Why did this happen to me?” The deeper question is, “Now that this has happened, will I remain loyal to God?” The most important battles take place inside of us. When we’re burdened and bitter and broken, what will we do?

God’s answer to Job is instructive for you and for me. He basically challenged Job in the only thing he could control: his response. Blaming God for his brokenness got him nowhere; he needed to decide how he was going to respond. What was he going to do now? Was he going to shake his fist at God? Was he going to get better, or get bitter? His response was his responsibility. Likewise,

we can't change our circumstances, but we can change how we respond to them.

Pastor Steve Brown tells about a seminar one of his associate pastors was leading. During one session, the pastor pointed out that because God is love, no matter how bad things get, Christians should praise Him. Afterwards, a man came up to him in great agitation. "Dave, I can't buy what you say about praising God in the midst of evil and hurt." Then he went on to say what many people secretly feel, "I do not believe that when you lose someone you love through death, or you have cancer, or you lose your job that you ought to praise God." After a moment's silence, this pastor replied very simply, "What alternative do you propose?"

## Our Response

Indeed, what alternatives do we really have? We can stay burdened and bitter and broken, or we can get better. Let me suggest three responses that come directly out of the name El Shaddai.

### 1. Fall before Him in reverence.

When Abram heard from El Shaddai, Genesis 17:3 indicates that he dove for the dirt: "Abram fell facedown..." This is also what Ezekiel did when he caught a glimpse of the Almighty in Ezekiel 1:28: "I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking." Even when we don't understand we must still adore Him. When you feel empty express your praise to Him, even if you don't feel like it.

### 2. Run to Him as your refuge.

El Shaddai is powerful and He is also our protector. This is spelled out in Psalm 91:1: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." [El Shaddai] The idea here is that we take up lodging under the wings of El Shaddai. We don't just visit once in awhile; we live in the shelter He provides. When He is our residence, we find both rest and refuge. When her husband was martyred, Elizabeth Elliot was thinking of this passage when she entitled her book, "In the Shadow of the Almighty." What alternatives do you really have? You can try to escape through alcohol or drugs. You can reach out and have a relationship with someone. You can throw yourself into your career. But you will still be burdened, and bitter and broken. Stop running away from Him and run to Him right now.

### 3. Trust Him as your rewarder.

A time is coming when all wrongs will be made right. The second highest number of times the name Almighty is used is in the Book of Revelation. Here's just one example of what Jesus will do from Revelation 19:15: "Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. 'He will rule them with an iron scepter.' He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty." Larry Crabb suggests that the Book of Revelation helps us to keep believing in Jesus when the evidence makes it difficult. When your husband neglects you, find your nourishment in El Shaddai. When you live with unbearable pain, proclaim El Shaddai as your everything. When you're all alone and feeling empty, El Shaddai is enough!

Sometimes He allows good dreams to shatter to arouse the better dream of knowing Him. When we're burdened and bitter and broken we can finally chose to believe in the sufficiency of El Shaddai.

Are you feeling I-L-L today? If so, you're not alone. Two weeks ago many of you surrendered your possessions and the people in your life to Jehovah Jireh. It was in your surrendering that you were able to experience God as your provider. Now it's time to give your problems to El Shaddai. Are you ready to do that right now?

**A.W. Tozer** once wrote, "Anything God has ever done, He can do now. Anything God has every done anywhere, He can do here. Anything God has ever done for anyone, He can do for you."

**Closing Song:** ["El Shaddai"](#)

**Benediction:** "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

**Related Resource:**

- [EL Shaddai - God Almighty](#)

**The God Who Is There  
Jehovah Shammah**

Scripture: Ezekiel 48:35

Summary: This name means, "God is there."

My mind goes back to an experience I had when we served as missionaries in Mexico City. One day I took the Metro (subway) to the far southern part of the city to teach English to a couple businessmen. I had to make several transfers to different lines and finally arrived at my stop about an hour and a half later. When I got off the subway, I walked about ten blocks and suddenly I became aware of how alone I was. My heart started racing. I didn't know anyone around me and I knew I stood out as an American. I tried not to look lost even though I sort of was. No one knew where I was, and I started to get afraid. And then, the Lord reminded me that He was with me. In a city of 24 million people, I was lonely but not alone because Jehovah Shammah was with me. This name means, "God is there." To help us remember this truth, let's repeat this phrase together: **"God is there, He is here, He is everywhere"**

In the Garden of Eden we read that everything was perfect because the Creator (Elohim) wanted Adam and Eve to live in a place of beauty and comfort as seen in Genesis 1:9: "And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food." As beautiful as the creation was, the real joy was that "God himself walked in the garden in the cool of the day..." (Genesis 3:8). God's presence was to be their greatest pleasure. But because Adam and Eve chose to disobey, the entire human race was plunged into darkness and death. Thankfully, God continued to reveal Himself and make His presence known. Genesis 5:22 tells us that Enoch "walked with God 300 years."

We've learned in this series that El Shaddai also talked with Abraham. He allowed Jacob to wrestle with Him to teach him the truth that God is always present. Moses, who doubted God's presence, had an encounter with the Almighty at the burning bush, and later declared in Exodus 33:15: "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here." Moses wasn't going to mobilize unless God moved with him. Yahweh demonstrated His powerful presence to the Israelites while they were in the desert of despair by using two symbols. By day, a cloud led them, and by night a pillar of fire pronounced His presence. God was personally and powerfully present with His people at all times and in all places. Let's repeat this phrase again: "God is there, He is here, He is everywhere."

On top of that, the Israelites had a portable tabernacle that symbolized the fact that God was with them. This tabernacle replaced the tent of meeting that Moses set up (Exodus 33:7-11). The tabernacle was to be constructed with specific details, that I won't go into right now, but suffice it to say that according to Exodus 25:8, this was to be the "dwelling place for God." (ED: see also [Shekinah glory cloud](#)) This helped the Israelites know that God was present with them.

Now let's fast forward to the time of King David and look at Psalm 139:7-10:

"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."

This passage establishes one of the Almighty's attributes referred to as the Omnipresence of God. Simply stated, this means that God is always wherever He needs to be to do whatever needs to be done. He's everywhere present at the same time. He is there, He is here, and He is everywhere.

King David was eager to build a permanent place for God but was not allowed to. Instead, his son Solomon had the privilege of constructing a place for God's name to dwell. Using enormous resources, this project took over 7 years to complete. The temple symbolized the fact that God was there for his people, and yet Solomon recognized that a building could not contain the awesome glory of God in 1 Kings 8:27: "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"

Unfortunately, even though they now had the Temple, and the assurance of God's presence, the people compromised spiritually, and fell away from the Almighty. In one sense, they were more preoccupied with the place than with the presence of God Himself. God then brought numerous prophets on the scene to bring them back, but they were often met with resistance. Finally, because of their disobedience, God mobilized the Babylonians to come and attack Jerusalem, and 400 years after it was constructed, the Temple was destroyed, and the people were deported to what is modern-day Iraq.

With that as a brief background, let's hit a few highlights from the Book of Ezekiel. God's people are living in a foreign land and they wonder whether God has left them completely. God had warned them repeatedly and now, according to Ezekiel 20:44, He has sent judgment so that, "You will know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake." After coming face-to-face with the glory of God in chapter one, Ezekiel is called in chapter two to give a message to this messed-up people. He does so with some groaning and with a broken heart as expressed in Ezekiel 21:6: "Therefore groan, son of man! Groan before them with broken heart and bitter grief."



In chapter 33, Ezekiel is appointed as God's watchman as he pleads with God's people to turn back to the truth. Ezekiel 33:11 provides some comfort and some hope as we gain insight into God's heart: "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" God then reveals His desire to restore His people in Ezekiel 36:26-27<sup>±</sup>: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." In [Ezekiel 37](#), the prophet speaks to a valley filled with dry bones and commands them to live once again.

When we come to the last section of Ezekiel, we read about plans associated with the rebuilding of the Temple. It had been 14 long years since the Temple had been trampled and the people were no doubt dismayed and discouraged. Remember that the Temple symbolized God's presence among His people (Ezekiel 43:4-5). Turn now to the last chapter of Ezekiel. There are a lot of details here, much of which is beyond my understanding, but don't let this distract you from the promise of God's presence as found in the very last verse: "And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE." This is the name Jehovah Shammah. Whatever else we can say about this passage, it is essentially a prophecy about the promise of God's abiding presence. In their darkest hour they were reminded that [let's say it together] "God is there, He is here, He is everywhere."

## **Where Does God Dwell Now?**

I'll never forget the question that a little boy asked when he came to the Birthday Party for Jesus last December. He came in the doors, looked around, and said, "Where is He?" That's a good question. Where is God today? We know that He is there and He is here and He is everywhere, but where is He specifically? Here's a general principle to keep in mind. God's presence is not so much limited to a place as it was in the Old Testament; today, God's presence is with people. The Bible describes at least four ways that Jehovah Shammah is present.

### **1. Jehovah Shammah is Jesus.**

In John 1:14<sup>+</sup>, we read that "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." The word "dwelling" can be translated "tabernacled" or "templed" among us. In John 2:19-20<sup>+</sup>, Jesus referred to himself as the "temple" of God. In fact, this comment enraged His enemies so much that they brought it up at His trial in Matthew 26:61: "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" God's presence is no longer restricted to a place but was fully evident in the person of His Son. That's why He was referred to as "[Immanuel](#)" in Matthew 1:23<sup>+</sup>, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, as "God with us." Colossians 1:19<sup>±</sup> states: "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him."

### **2. Jehovah Shammah dwells in believers.**

When Jesus declared that He was the dwelling place of God, the people were blown away. This next truth is equally profound. Those who are born again have become temples of God! This is the thrust of 1 Corinthians 3:16: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" God displays His beauty and glory today through believers, and as such, we must treat our bodies carefully and make sure they are dedicated to His purposes. This is spelled out clearly in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20<sup>±</sup>: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." The way we live should declare to the world that Jehovah Shammah is present within us. Or to say it another way, the world will learn about God based upon the way we are living. That's a weighty responsibility and a holy charge.

### **3. Jehovah Shammah is displayed in the church.**

In his book called, "The Church God Blesses," Jim Cymbala writes: "Even though individual lives are being changed by the power of the gospel, God's special concern is always focused on local churches that spread his gospel and disciple new converts...Jesus himself wrote seven letters to different local congregations (Revelation 2-3) and was seen walking among them...He has chosen to work here on earth through his church" (Pages 9-10). We are His temple individually as believers, and the collective church is also His dwelling place.

As such, we must protect God's presence and make sure His glory is on display as 2 Corinthians 6:16-17 says: "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate,' says the Lord." As the popular song by Casting Crowns asks, "But if we are the body, why aren't His arms reaching? Why aren't his hands healing? Why aren't His words teaching? And if we are the body, why aren't his feet going? Why is His love not showing them there is a way?"

### **4. Jehovah Shammah is preparing a place for us.**

When Jesus announced to His disciples that He was leaving them, He told them that He was getting a place ready for them and then said in John 14:3: "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." There's a time coming when we

will be in His presence and as John 17:24 says, we will “behold his glory.” Ezekiel’s prophecy will ultimately be fulfilled when the New Jerusalem is filled with the redeemed. This scene is breathtaking in its beauty and is described by John in Revelation 21:1-3: “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.’”

To see the ultimate fulfillment of Jehovah Shammah, drop down to the end of this chapter in Revelation 22-23: “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.”

## **Action Steps**

### **1. Chose to trust Him.**

It’s one thing to profess that God is always present; it’s another thing to really believe it, especially when we go through tough times. In the 16th Century a man named “John of the Cross” wrote extensively about what he called the, “dark nights of the soul.” If you’ve not experienced this yet, chances are you will at some point in your life. In the Psalms David described his times of despair. Psalm 10:1: “Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” Psalm 69:1-3: “Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God.”

In the recent issue of Discipleship Journal, Tom Eisenman points out that God has a three-pronged painful process for us to go through (March/April 2005). When the nights are dark, God does some divine demolition in our lives by...

- · Pruning. John 15:2: “...Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be more fruitful.
- · Refining. Another process is through fire. Isaiah 48:10: “See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.”
- · Shaking. Just as he removed the rebellion from the Israelites through their captivity, so too, God uses stressful situations and circumstances to help us see what is most important. Hebrews 12:27: “The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.”

When you go through problems, remember that God is present with you and claim the promise of Zephaniah 3:17: “The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” Isaiah 43:2 teaches that whatever we go through, God will be with us: “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” Eisenman concludes by suggesting some ways that we can cooperate with God during these dark times of the soul:

· Honestly express your emotions to God

- · Fight the temptation to run away from your distress
- · Resist trying harder
- · Seek companions
- · Release your expectations
- · Be patient
- · Call to mind God’s faithfulness

I like what Charles Spurgeon once said, “Whatever your difficulties and trials and sorrows, all is well with you if God is your delight, and His presence your joy.” The name Jehovah Shammah is a reminder that in our darkest hour, God is with us. When you feel abandoned or afraid, address Him as Jehovah Shammah.

### **2. Live for the Lord right now.**

If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are now the place where God dwells. You are His temple; and therefore you must be clean. It’s time to come out and be separate. This week I read about Brian “Head” Welch, a founding member of the popular hard-core heavy metal band called Korn. I’ve never listened to this group but I went on “Plugged-In Online” ([www.pluggedinonline.com](http://www.pluggedinonline.com)) to find out about them. I learned that their lyrics focus on hatred, homicide and hopelessness. Their style is aggressive and their emphasis is immoral. One reviewer referred to them as having “harsh language and venomous rage.”

According to the group’s management, Brian Welch “has chosen Jesus Christ as his Savior and will be dedicating his musical

pursuits to that end.” On February 8th, Brian Welch apparently wrote a letter of resignation to the band’s management, detailing a long list of reasons for leaving the band, including increased moral objections to Korn’s music and videos. (See my 2/24/05 blog to read more: [www.pontiacbible.org/brian](http://www.pontiacbible.org/brian)).

What about you? Does your lifestyle demonstrate that God is present in you? Have you been compromising your commitment? Pastor Jeff is going to address this tonight as he continues his series with the students based on the early chapters of Revelation.

### 3. Don’t Fear the Future.

While most of us live in the present, some of us are fearful of the future and others of us are piled by the past. I’m thankful that God is an ever-present help for trouble today, and I’m also glad that Jehovah Shammah has the future covered. I recently read an article called, “The God of My Future Problems.” The author begins by defining God’s “prevenient grace.” This literally means the grace that goes before. In every situation of life God is already at work before I get there. He is working creatively, strategically and redemptively for my good and His glory in order to accomplish His purposes.

While I am struggling with the problems of today, God is at work providing solutions for the things I’m going to face tomorrow. He’s working in situations right now that I haven’t even faced yet. He’s preparing them for me and me for them. Or to say it another way: “While I’m living in Sunday, He’s already in Tuesday.” Are you worried about next week? Chill out. He’s already there. How about next year? Don’t sweat it. He’s got it covered. Since God is already in the future, you can trust Him today and put your hope in Him for tomorrow, even if trials come your way (and they will).

It would be enough if God simply walked with us through the events of life. But He does much more than that. He goes ahead of us, clearing the way, arranging the details of life, so that when we get there, we can have confidence that God has already been there before us. Knowing that God holds the future in His hands should provide us with comfort today.

We have some promises about the presence of God. Claim these as your own as you call out to Jehovah Shammah in prayer.

- Habakkuk 2:4: “Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD, and work. For I am with you, declares the LORD Almighty.”
- Hebrews 13:5: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”
- Matthew 28:20: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

I’d like to close by making ten statements that I’d like you to respond to by saying, “God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”

1. When you feel alone...“God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”
2. When your boyfriend or girlfriend breaks up with you...“God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”
3. When you get bad news from the doctor...“God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”
4. When your child makes bad decisions...“God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”
5. When you wonder why you hurt so bad...“God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”
6. When you feel like hurting yourself...“God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”
7. When you’re tempted to do something wrong...“God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”
8. When you make a mistake...“God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”
9. When you can’t pay your bills...“God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”
10. When you’re afraid about the future...“God is there, He is here, He is everywhere.”

#### Related Resource:

- [Jehovah Shammah - The LORD is There](#)

## God The Healer Jehovah Rapha

Brian Bill

Scripture: Exodus 15:26, Isaiah 53:5

Summary: This morning our focus is on yet another name for God – Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals.

Beth and I were out on a driving date Monday night. It’s one of our favorite things to do. We just get in the car, pick up a couple

decafs and talk while we cruise the town. As we were going down one street, we saw three young women walking to their car. I slowed down because it was icy and just then, one of them slipped and went down hard on the curb. I pulled over, got out of the car and went over to them. By the time I got there, they were in their car and had started to drive down the road. I flagged them over and asked if they were OK. The one who had fallen was crying and holding her arm very gingerly. I told them that my wife was a nurse and asked if she wanted Beth to look at it. She got out of the car and after giving her some suggestions, Beth told her she might need an X-ray. As I helped her back into the car, I told her that we would pray for her. She and her friends said thanks and headed for help.

It strikes me that this individual was in need of three types of healing that cold night. She certainly needed physical attention. She needed emotional support because she was sad and afraid. And I'm assuming that she needed some spiritual help as well. Maybe you've had a fall yourself. Perhaps you're dealing with a physical frailty right now and you're exhausted emotionally. Or your past hurts are still causing present pain. And there's a good chance that you've slipped spiritually at some point in your life. One of my roles as a pastor is to pray with people when they are broken physically, emotionally or spiritually. Pastor Jeff and I have been with many of you when you've had to face some pretty tough stuff. If we were to add up the amount of agony and pain represented in this congregation it would literally take our breath away.

This morning our focus is on yet another name for God – Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. This name is first revealed shortly after the Israelites were unshackled from their bondage in Egypt. They have just passed through the Red Sea on dry ground. The people are excited to finally be free and so they express their praise in the first part of Exodus 15. Look at Ex 15:1-3: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name." God is referred to by two of His names (Elohim and Yahweh) in this song of praise that lasts for twenty-one verses.

But then their praising turns into a time of protesting. In Ex 15:22 we read that Moses led them into the "Desert of Shur." "Shur" means a "wall." And that's exactly how they felt. They had run into a wall of despair instead of a window to blessing. Some of you feel like you've hit a wall. After wandering in the wilderness for three days, and having no water to drink, the people turn on Moses at a place called Marah, which means "bitterness." By the way, this is the name Naomi chose for herself after experiencing incredible pain and disappointment in Ruth 1:20.

God's people go from giving praise to grumbling their protests because when they finally find some water, they soon discover that it had a very bitter taste. Talk about disappointment! They were probably very excited to locate this refreshment only to have their expectations shattered. In verse 24, they put Moses on the spot: "What are we to drink?" The people are angry with God but they take it out on a person. We do that as well, don't we? Someone has said that anger is a magnet in search of metal, and the closest metal was Moses. We tend to take things out on others when we don't get what we want when we want it.

When we're pumped up everything seems great but then there's that inevitable let-down. We certainly experienced that as a church during the 40 Days of Purpose Journey. We were riding high and then came back down to reality as we headed into some deep and bitter waters. The Israelites saw God provide in making a way through the Red Sea but now they're thirsty. On top of that, now they have a bitter taste in their mouth. Some of you may feel that way this morning. You've gone from high expectations to great disappointment to heavy discouragement.

I want you to notice that their gratitude turns to griping when the memory of God's faithfulness is somehow forgotten, and it only took them three days to land in the ditch of despair. Bitterness can blind us to the promises of God. They had forgotten that life in Egypt was terrible even though they ate bitter herbs as part of the Passover to remember the bitterness of slavery (Exodus 12:8). But now freedom from Egypt has also left them feeling bitter because their expectations are shattered.

Moses does what he should do and cries out to the Lord. Instead of protesting, he prays. That's what hard times can do for us. When we're in pain, we must pray. God answers Moses by showing him a simple piece of wood. Moses takes the wood and whips it into the water and the water immediately becomes sweet. God then initiates a test and tells them in Ex 15:26: "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." God is linking their holiness with their health as He declares one more name for Himself: Jehovah Rapha. In the midst of their bitterness and hurt, God reveals Himself as their healer.

The word Rapha is used some sixty times in the Old Testament and means, "to restore, to heal, or to cure" physically, emotionally and spiritually. In 1 Kings 18:30, we get a picture of what Rapha means when we read that Elijah "repaired" (Rapha) the altar of Jehovah. In 2 Kings 2:21, God "heals" (Rapha) the water when Elisha throws salt in the spring. The word has the idea of restoring something to its original state.

Sometimes we are in need of healing in all three areas at the same time like David was in Psalm 6:2-3:

- Emotional: “Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint...”
- Physical: “O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in agony...”
- Spiritual: “My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long?”

At other times, one of these areas seems to take precedence as the bitterness that comes from brokenness breaks through. God reveals Himself as Jehovah Rapha when we are in need of...

### **Emotional Healing.**

Jehovah Rapha heals emotional hurts and broken hearts. Psalm 147:3: “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” The word “broken” means “to burst, to break into pieces, to crush and to smash.” Some of you feel that way right now. Your emotional pain is overwhelming. Friend, whatever pain you’re carrying around, hand it to the Healer today. Some of you have incredibly intense hurt that I can’t begin to relate to. Maybe it’s something that happened when you were younger. Or perhaps it just happened yesterday. In the midst of your tears, cry out to Jehovah Rapha and ask Him to put you back together again. Related to this, relational ruptures can cause emotional pain. If you’re struggling with a broken relationship, I encourage you to do what you can to make peace as Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

### **Physical Healing.**

Some of you are experiencing a tough time right now as you’re trying to process the pain and discouragement that comes from physical difficulties. Maybe it’s personal pain or maybe you’re devastated by the news you’ve received about a family member or a friend. Whatever the case, when our bodies don’t work right, we can end up feeling uptight. At times like this, we need to ask Jehovah Rapha to do His healing work in our lives. The Bible is filled with examples of God’s healing touch. In 2 Kings 20:5-6 we read that Hezekiah became very ill and was about to die. As a result of intense intercession, he was healed and his life was even extended. This is really an amazing account: “This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you...I will add fifteen years to your life.” In the Gospels we see that Jesus spent a surprising amount of time healing people.

### **Spiritual Healing.**

This is by far the most important of the three realms of healing. Jehovah Rapha sees that we are spiritually sick and He provides healing and wholeness through the shed blood of Jesus on the Cross. Our diagnosis is bad and our prognosis is terminal. Jeremiah 17:9 records the incurable condition of the human heart: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” We are sinners who have been inflicted with the disease of death and destruction and we’re in desperate need of a new heart.

Early in His ministry, Jesus got up in the synagogue one day and quoted from the Book of Isaiah, “He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed” (Luke 4:18). Once we are set free spiritually, Jesus can break every other bondage we are under, including addictions and deep-seated sin patterns. While it’s certainly true that Jesus healed a lot of people physically, He is always more interested in curing our sin problem. Do you remember what Jesus passed along to John the Baptist when he wanted to know if He was really the Messiah? Listen to these words from Matthew 11:5: “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.” Evangelism, not physical healing, must always be the main point of our ministry as well.

The pervasiveness of sin in our souls is pictured very vividly in Isaiah 1:5-6: “Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness — only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil.” Our depravity is total, affecting every part of our lives. Verse 18 provides the good news, showing the cleansing power of forgiveness: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

### **Passing the Test**

When the Israelites were faced with three days of no water, Numbers 15:25 says that God tested them. Likewise, when we go through tough times emotionally, physically or spiritually, we are really entering a testing time. There are at least nine principles to keep in mind that will help us pass the test and better understand the healing power of Jehovah Rapha.

#### **1. Trials and troubles can get us back on track.**

I talked to someone this week who told me that his difficulties led him to read the Bible and get close to the Lord. Another person told me that this past year was extremely difficult but it was actually a blessing because he fully surrendered to Christ as a result of the pain. That’s exactly what the psalmist said in Psalm 119:67, 71: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word...It

was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.” Beth Moore suggests that we all have “empty places” in our lives as a result of brokenness and dissatisfaction is a “secret abyss” for many of us. When we’re hurting, we must run to Jehovah Rapha and resist the urge to fill our emptiness with things that will not satisfy.

## **2. Sometimes our pain is related to personal sin.**

When you’re hurting physically or emotionally, it’s good to do a quick inventory to see if you have any unconfessed sin in your life. In Psalm 32:3-4, David links his physical pain and his emotional agony to his personal sin: “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.” This theme is continued in Psalm 38:3, 17-18: “Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin...For I am about to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.” Let me say it again. Personal sin may be a contributing factor to your illness and therefore should be taken seriously.

## **3. Not all illness is directly linked to personal sin.**

We can certainly say that all illness ultimately is a result of Adam and Eve’s sin, but we must be careful to not link every problem we have to some sin in our lives. This was the mistake that Job’s friends made when they kept accusing him of wrongdoing. In their minds, Job was suffering because he had somehow sinned. Let’s be careful here. Some of you beat yourself up mercilessly as you blame yourself for your own pain. Others of you need to back off and stop giving your perspective on why someone else is suffering. Jesus addressed this prevalent mindset when he was asked to explain why a certain man was blind. His disciples wanted to know whether the man had sinned or his parents. Jesus answered in John 9:3: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”

## **4. Its OK to go to professionals but go to the Great Physician first.**

While there are some people who refuse to get any help because they want to trust God alone for their healing, it’s my understanding that God often works His healing through doctors, other trained professionals, and through medicine. Remember that the bitter waters at Marah became better only when something was added to them. God could have made them sweet apart from any other means, but he chose to use the wood. Likewise God can heal with just a word from His mouth, but He uses other instruments as well. Having said that, what Asa did in the Old Testament is a warning to us. When he was sick, he didn’t go to God first but instead went right to the doctor. This is described in 2 Chronicles 16:12: “Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians.” Here’s the point. Don’t bypass the Great Physician on the way to the doctor’s office.

## **5. We need the community of faith.**

James 5:14-16 describes what we should do when we are sick. First of all, call for the Elders of the church and ask for prayer. Second, confess your sins to others. Third, pray for each other. These steps are only possible if you’re plugged into a community of faith. When you’re hurting, you need the help of others. But sometimes those around us don’t always know how to help. Listen to this story called “Comforters” (adapted from Linda Mae Richardson).

When I was diagnosed with a deadly disease...

- My first friend came and expressed shock by saying, “I can’t believe you’re sick. I always thought you were so active and healthy.” He left and I felt alienated and somehow very different.
- My second friend came and brought me information about different treatments and gave me his opinion about what to do. He left and I felt scared and confused.
- My third friend came and tried to answer my “whys?” and told me God may be disciplining me for some sin in my life. She left and I felt guilty.
- My fourth friend came and told me that that if my faith was greater God would heal me. He left and I felt like my faith must be inadequate.
- My fifth friend came and told me to remember that all things work together for good. She left and I felt angry.
- My sixth friend never came at all. I felt sad and alone.
- My seventh friend came and held my hand and said, “I care. I’m here. I want to help you through this.” She left, I felt loved, and I knew everything was going to be OK.

## **6. Faith is a force in healing.**

Some people mistakenly believe that if we just have enough faith, we can be healed of everything. At the other end of the spectrum, others think that God does not heal today and so they don’t even pray about their problems. The proper biblical perspective is this.

Pray earnestly for healing to Jehovah Rapha, and have faith to believe that He can heal you, but be careful about demanding that He answer your prayers according to your will. We are to pray according to His will. Joni Eareckson Tada, who is in a wheelchair as a result of a diving accident adds, "God certainly can, and sometimes does, heal people in a miraculous way today. But the Bible does not teach that He will always heal those who come to him in faith. He sovereignly reserves the right to heal or not heal as He sees fit" ("A Step Further," Zondervan, 1978, Page 127). Tim Hansel writes: "I have prayed hundreds, if not thousands of times for the Lord to heal me...and He finally healed me of the need to be healed."

Having said that, we need to keep Mark 6:5-6 in mind. This passage explains the importance of faith to Jesus: "He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith." Faith somehow unleashes the healing power of God. James 4:2 says, "You do not have, because you do not ask God."

### **7. Sometimes healing takes place in unusual ways.**

Tony Campolo tells a story about being in a church where he was asked to pray for a man who had cancer. He prayed boldly for the man's healing and that next week he got a telephone call from the man's wife. She said, "You prayed for my husband. He had cancer." Campolo thought when he heard her use the past tense that his cancer had been eradicated! But then she said, "He died." Campolo felt terrible. But she continued, "Don't feel bad. When you saw him he was filled with anger. He knew he was going to be dead in a short period of time, and he hated God. He was 58 years old, and he wanted to see his children and grandchildren grow up. He was angry that this all-powerful God didn't take away his sickness and heal him. He would lie in bed and curse God. The more his anger grew towards God, the more miserable he was to everybody around him. It was an awful thing to be in his presence." But the lady told Campolo, "After you prayed for him, a peace had come over him and a joy had come into him. Tony, the last three days have been the best days of our lives. We've sung. We've laughed. We've read Scripture. We prayed. Oh, they've been wonderful days. And I called to thank you for laying your hands on him and praying for healing." And then she said something incredibly profound. Tony, she said, "He wasn't cured, but he was healed." (Tony Campolo, "Year of Jubilee," Preaching Today Tape #212).

### **8. Don't be careless about communion.**

In a few moments we are going to celebrate communion to help us remember what Christ did for us on the Cross. My sense is that we don't think enough about the seriousness of this ordinance. In 1 Corinthians 11:29-30, Paul tells Christians to approach the elements with a sense of awe and to make sure we are living in unity with others. If we don't, we're in danger of actually becoming sick or even dying: "For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep."

### **9. The Cross of Christ is the source of healing.**

The Jehovah who heals in the Old Testament is the Jesus who heals in the New. Don't miss the significance behind the wood from a tree providing sweetness to the bitter water. All of our problems began at a tree in the Garden of Eden and our sin problem is resolved because another piece of wood was used to hold up our Sin Substitute on the Cross. Isaiah 53:5 says that "the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." 1 Peter 2:24 picks up on this prophecy: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." Only Jesus can sweeten the bitterness of life. He is the bondage breaker as Leviticus 26:13 says: "I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high."

### **Making the Bitter Better**

Maybe you've fallen recently and it feels like you've crashed so quickly you don't even know what happened. Whether you're hurting emotionally, physically or spiritually, turn to Jehovah Rapha right now. Let's go back to Exodus 15 for a moment. After God made the sour waters sweet, He then led the Israelites to a place called Elim. We read in Ex 15:27 that Elim had twelve springs and seventy palm trees. God led them to a place of plenty. Even if we're not cured we can be healed by Jesus. He is both the wood and the living water as He said in John 7:37: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." The only way to go from Marah to Elim is to turn to Jesus, who is Jehovah Rapha.

If you're in need of healing right now, whether emotional, physical, or spiritual (or all three), would you please stand and allow me to pray for you?

**Communion.** On Good Friday, we're going to experience "Christ in the Passover." The person who will lead this service will bring some bitter herbs. These are part of the Passover celebration in order to remind God's people of the bitterness of bondage. Likewise, we were enslaved to sin before Christ set us free. Let's remember our redemption right now in a spirit of awe and in community with one another.

## Related Resource:

- [Jehovah Rapha: \(Jehovah Rophe\) The LORD our Healer](#)

# God Of Power Jehovah Sabaoth

by Brian Bill

Scripture: Isaiah 6:5

Summary: The name of God that we are studying today is Jehovah Sabaoth, which at its root, refers to a captain or general who commands a mighty army.

I have never served in the service or gone off to war but I certainly got into skirmishes with my sisters when I was growing up! I celebrated a birthday milestone this past week and my siblings sent me cards that show the war is not over. Let me read three of them to you.

Happy Birthday to a brother who was always there to take me by the hand...and then bend my wrist backward until my fingers touched my arm. [Mary added: "Its okay, I'm over it now!"]

Even when someone irritates...you, you can still love them. Brothers teach us that.

Brother, celebrate your birthday like you're a kid again. In your room. No supper. No TV. Just sitting and thinking about what you've done. [Jean added: "Explain this one to your girls." Our girls asked me about this but I can't remember a specific situation, because I was put in isolation all the time!]

Actually, one of my sisters sent me a nice card that was very meaningful. When I was telling one of my other sisters on the phone that my youngest sister sent me "a card from the heart," she immediately said, "Don't let it go to your head...It's probably because she couldn't find the other kind!"

It strikes me that a number of you have served in the armed forces, or have a family member serving right now. If so, would you please stand so we can extend our appreciation to you? Thank you for your service to our country, and to those who have family members serving, thank you for your sacrifice. I was reminded of your dedication this week at my Kiwanis meeting when the speaker, who is a National Guard recruiter, was asked to describe the benefits of joining the service. The person asking the question was wondering about the free tuition and other compensation. Without hesitation, he said that the best benefit is the chance to serve our country and spread freedom around the world.

I've been reading a book called, "**A Table in the Presence**" by Carey Cash, a chaplain for the U.S. Marines. In this dramatic account, his Battalion experienced God's presence and power in an amazing way during the war in Iraq. When they were up against the wall, God came through for them time and time again. Listen to what he writes:

"During the long weeks in the Kuwaiti desert, we had often talked about God's protection and had prayed for it in every service. We had asked God for courage and quiet resolve in the face of the enemy...for six weeks, many of us had looked to God for grace and help in our time of need, and God had graciously responded. He had calmed our fears, breathed hope and confidence into our souls, and readied us for the fight" (W Publishing, 2004, Page 54).

The name of God that we are studying today is Jehovah Sabaoth, which at its root, refers to a captain or general who commands a mighty army. It's used over 270 times in the Bible. By the way, the King James translates this name as "LORD of Hosts" while the NIV uses "LORD Almighty." We've already described the name Jehovah as the self-existent one who is personal, present, powerful, and the ultimate promise-keeper. The word Sabaoth can refer to one of four large groups, or a large quantity of hosts:

- A huge congregation
- An immense army
- Celestial bodies – stars (see Isaiah 34:4)
- Innumerable angelic beings (see Luke 2:13)

The Lord Almighty has all the hosts of heaven ready to do His work. Psalm 24:10 asks the question: "Who is he, this King of glory?"



The LORD Almighty [Jehovah Sabaoth] — he is the King of glory.” God is the king and commander over every army, both spiritual and earthly, and He mobilizes them to accomplish His purposes. Amos 4:13 describes this name of God in greater detail: “He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, he who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth—the LORD God Almighty [Jehovah Sabaoth] is his name.” When we truly understand this name for God we will never view Him the same again. He has unlimited power, unbridled might and untarnished glory. He is impossible to describe and incredible to imagine.

Charles Spurgeon once preached: “The Lord of Hosts...is on our side as our August Ally; woe unto those who fight against Him, for they shall flee like smoke before the wind when He gives the word to scatter them.” The name Jehovah Sabaoth is used when God’s people are in deep weeds, or as my friend Ray likes to say, “When you’re hip-deep in alligators and there’s no way to drain the swamp.” Kay Arthur refers to this as God’s name for man’s extremity. We could say it this way: God goes to battle when our backs are up against the wall. Chaplain Carey Cash captures this idea when he quotes a prayer from a grandmother in Mississippi. She prayed three things for our troops as they moved across Iraq (Page 68).

- Confusion among the generals of Saddam’s army.
- Salvation for many.
- Legions of warring angels with drawn swords to go before you as you make your approach.

That last request is directly related to the name Jehovah Sabaoth. The Holy One is the commander of the hosts of heaven. We’re going to look at four biblical illustrations this morning to help us get a better picture of this name, and to help us learn to call Him by this name when we are at the end our ropes. We affirm that the battle belongs to the Lord. He goes to battle when our backs are against the wall.

### **1. When you feel oppressed (1 Samuel 1:11).**

The first instance of Jehovah Sabaoth is found in 1 Samuel 1:3, where we read that Elkanah, who was married to Hannah and Peninnah, went up from his town every year to “worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty [Jehovah Sabaoth] at Shiloh.” This shows us something about this man’s devout spirituality. When the whole culture was headed south spiritually, Elkanah swam against the tide of apathy, and took his family to worship. I believe one of the reasons he went to the Lord of Hosts for help was because his two wives were battling each other. Peninnah had children but Hannah was barren and bothered by the whole ordeal. In that culture barrenness was thought to be a sign of God’s displeasure.

Verse 6 describes the character and personality of Peninnah: “...her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her.” She couldn’t just be thankful that she had children but felt the need to needle and harass Hannah. The word “provoke” literally means, “To cause her thunder.” She’s trying to get Hannah to blow her top! The word “irritate” refers to being stirred up inwardly. 1 Samuel 1:7 says that Peninnah provoked Hannah so much that she wept and would not eat. Have you ever been so sad that you couldn’t even eat?

Hannah’s back was up against the wall and she needed God to do battle for her. She was bitter and broken and took her requests to Jehovah Sabaoth. In verse 11, she makes a vow saying, “O LORD Almighty [Jehovah Sabaoth], if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life...” She needed God to unleash the armies of heaven because she was at the end of her rope. And God heard her request and gave her a son named Samuel. Incidentally, one reason I think God answered her prayer is because this mother knew that Israel needed a godly man like Samuel and she was willing to give him back to the Lord for His purposes and plans. She had the right motives and God honored that.

Are you oppressed by someone right now or maybe depressed about a situation like Hannah was? If so, call out to Jehovah Sabaoth. God goes to battle when our backs are against the wall.

### **2. When you feel overwhelmed (1 Samuel 17:45).**

God also unleashes the armies of heaven when we are overwhelmed, when the problems in front of us seem so huge and so big that we want to run the other way. Please turn in your Bible to 1 Samuel 17 where we read the account of David and Goliath. We don’t have time to dig into the depths of this amazing passage so I’ll just skim over the surface. The Philistines were the arch enemies of Israel and had gathered for war in the Valley of Elah (show slide) to take on God’s people. The Philistines had a champion named Goliath who was two feet taller than Shaquille O’Neal. He was decked out in body armor that weighed 125 pounds and was armed with a javelin, a spear and a shield bearer. This mammoth of a man challenged the Israelites to a smackdown fight as he belched out blasphemies against God.

David’s job was to take some bread and some cheese (he must have been from Wisconsin) to the commander of the unit and to also check on how his older brothers were doing. When David was there he heard Goliath shout his usual defiance. This taunting

had been going on twice a day for forty days. Each time the Israelites heard his voice, “they all ran away from him in great fear” (1 Samuel 17:24). This reminds me of an “Adventures in Odyssey” episode that our family has listened to several times. The setting is a snowball fight that broke out over some warm chocolate chip cookies. Alex, the commander of this ragtag army asks a question to the younger and smaller squad, “Are we warriors or are we wimps?” To which they reply in a very high voice, “We are wimps, sir!” That’s precisely how the Israelites were acting. They should have been warriors but they were wimps.

David then asked the question that should have been asked long ago in 1 Samuel 17:26: “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?” David’s older brother became enraged and basically told David to go back to his cheese curds and shepherding. But then Saul, the King of Israel, heard about David’s courageous candor and sent for him. In 1 Samuel 17:32, David said to Saul, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.” Saul tries to dismiss David’s bravado but David reminds Saul how he had killed a lion and a bear. He had been up against the wall before and had seen God go to battle for him. Notice 1 Samuel 17:37: “The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul then told David to go for it and tried to give him his armor, but since it didn’t fit, David discarded it. He picked up what he was used to – his staff, his slingshot, and then found five smooth stones and went off in search of the giant.

When Goliath came closer to David and saw that he was just a boy, he despised him and said in 1 Samuel 17:43: “Am I a dog that you come at me with sticks?” After teasing him, he called out a curse on David and declared that he would feed him to the birds and the beasts. I love David’s response in verse 45. Listen carefully for the name Jehovah Sabaoth: “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, [Jehovah Sabaoth] the God of the armies [Sabaoth] of Israel, whom you have defied.” David then describes in great detail what he will do to Goliath and declares in 1 Samuel 17:47: “All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.”

In David’s eyes, God was the giant and Goliath was just a goon. God’s powerful presence was more real to David than Goliath was to the wimpy warriors. He was so confident in Jehovah Sabaoth as the commander of the armies of heaven that the Bible says that “he ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him.” And with one stone from his sling, he slayed the giant. That reminds me of Isaiah 54:17: “No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you.”

Here are seven principles from this encounter that will help us when we feel overwhelmed.

1. It’s inevitable that we will face giants like anxiety, fear, doubt, animosity, intimidating people and enemies.
2. Measure the giants you face against the greatness of God, not yourself. To David, the giant was an opportunity to know God better, not an obstacle to his faith.
3. Don’t try to fight the giants with someone else’s solution. Saul’s armor didn’t help David. Look to God alone for your armor.
4. Don’t run away from your problems; instead ask Jehovah Sabaoth to go to battle for you.
5. Verbalize your confidence in God. Say it out loud. It will help the words become real for you.
6. Remember who you are. David had just been anointed by Samuel in the previous chapter and therefore knew his position and his purpose. Do you?
7. Remember who God is. He is the Commander of the awesome armies of heaven and will go to battle for believers who reach out to Him in faith.

God goes to battle when our backs are against the wall. And He unleashes his holy host when we feel oppressed and outnumbered. He also goes to war when we feel outnumbered.

### **3. When you feel outnumbered (2 Kings 6:16-17).**

Have you ever felt stuck? When you sense that you can’t fight or flee from your problems, when you feel alone against a multitude of people or problems, it’s easy to want to give up. Turn in your Bible to 2 Kings 6 where we read of an unforgettable encounter. The prophet Elisha, not to be confused with Elijah, had managed to enrage the King of Aram. When this king determined that Elisha was in a town called Dothan, he mobilized his army, complete with horses and chariots to surround the city and set up an ambush to annihilate Elisha.

When Elisha’s servant got up early the next morning to pick up the paper, he looked up and saw a mighty army encircling the city. He panicked and woke Elisha up, exclaiming in 2 Kings 6:15: “O my lord, what shall we do?” This servant had some vision problems. His physical eyes worked fine but he was in need of some spiritual spectacles. He saw the danger but couldn’t see the deliverance. In 2 Kings 6:16, Elisha says, “Don’t be afraid...Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” I picture the servant looking around and wondering what Elisha was talking about.

When words alone couldn’t calm his quaking heart, 2 Ki 6:17 tells us that Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.” The

servant's fear had filleted his faith and so God had to give him spiritual eyes to see the invisible infantry: "Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." Chariots are symbols of God's power (Psalm 68:17) and "chariots of fire" communicate the dreadful and destructive power of God to incinerate His enemies. The servant thought he and Elisha were greatly outnumbered but in actuality, the armies of the Almighty God were arrayed against the enemy. Friend, never forget that when you are standing next to Jehovah Sabaoth, you are in the majority, no matter what is against you.

Allow the truth of Romans 8:31 to comfort you when you feel outnumbered: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" We need spiritual eyes to see that the spirit world is more real than this world. One of most unusual fish God created is a fish called "Four Eyes," which makes its home in Central and South America. His large, bulging eyes are so situated on his head that he can spend his time cruising along the water with only the upper half of each eye above the surface. The upper and lower parts of each eye have separate corneas and retinas. The top half has a water lens, which amounts to a set of bifocals, giving him the ability to see in both the upper and lower world. Each eye is divided into an aerial and an aquatic part, enabling him to see what's in the world above and in the water below. This fish is very hard to catch because it can see fisherman and birds coming from above and predators from below ([www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org)). That's the kind of discerning vision we should have as Christians. We need to have our eyes fixed around us; at the same time, we should always be looking up to see the spiritual battle that is taking place, as Paul said in Ephesians 6:12: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." The commander of the armies of heaven has mobilized the angelic host to do battle in the heavenly realms. Because of that, we can echo the words of David in Psalm 3:6: "I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side."

#### **4. When you feel impoverished (Haggai 1:4-11).**

The final passage I'd like to draw your attention to is found in the first chapter of the Book of Haggai. God's people have returned from captivity and they're excited to be back in the Promiseland. But instead of putting God first, they are busy building up their own lives. God is not happy with this. Look at verse 4: "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" God's temple has been ignored and God's holy name profaned by the way they are living.

In Hag 1:5-6, God refers to himself by the name Jehovah Sabaoth: "Now this is what the LORD Almighty [Jehovah Sabaoth] says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.'" God is saying that because the people have not put Him first, they are impoverished. In Hag 1:7, He refers to himself as Jehovah Sabaoth again and tells them to get to work on His house. In verse 9, Jehovah Sabaoth says that He has dashed their expectations and blown away what they have held on to so tightly. Why? "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house."

Friend, the God of the angel armies will go to battle for you when your back is up against the wall, when you're feeling oppressed, overwhelmed and outnumbered. But he will also marshal his troops against us if we are not putting Him first in our lives. He does this because He loves us. He does this to get our attention. He does this for His glory and for our ultimate good. If it seems like what you've been chasing has just vaporized before your eyes, if you make money only to find it flowing through holes in your pocket, if you feel like you never have enough, the Lord Almighty may be knocking out the props in your life to get your attention. And until you admit that you are impoverished apart from Him, things will not get better.

#### **Surrendering to the Commander**

Allow me to come back to the book, "A Table in the Presence." When Chaplain Carey Cash first met a young marine named Jeff Guthrie, he was without purpose and direction. He had been through some very difficult years and had turned into a complainer. Having been estranged from his family for over eight years, he tried everything he could do to be happy. Now he was in the Marines and was reeling from a very close call when his life could have ended. This tough guy was on the verge of tears, and sitting down on the grass in front of Guthrie, the Chaplain asked what was wrong.

"Sir...I'm, I'm just so sorry," he said, tears welling up in his tired eyes. The Chaplain had no idea what he was talking about and so he asked, "Sorry for what, Guthrie?" The young Marine replied, "It's just what I've done in my life. All I can think about is that I've just been through the worst experience of my life, and yet, God protected me through it all. But why did He do it? How could He do it after all the things—the bad things—I've done? I don't know what else to say, what else to feel. I'm just so sorry."

The chaplain describes the scene for the reader: "By now the tears are streaming down his face. Guthrie's fellow Marines, all twenty of them who are seated around the same ramp, stopped everything. They were listening intently, watching everything. He and I could feel their gaze, but it didn't matter. He was overcome...He had just come through the most frightening experience of his life and perhaps one of the single worst firefights of the entire war. Like many others, he was uninjured, unscathed, and unharmed. And

the only thing he could think about was his sinfulness...I was looking into the face of a man who, for the first time in life, was truly encountering the power of God. 'Jeff,' I said gently. 'Do you realize that God sent his Son, Jesus, for no other purpose than for forgiving all those things you or I have ever done wrong in life?'

The Chaplain and Jeff Guthrie then bowed in prayer as this Marine surrendered His life to the Commander of the Armies of Heaven and received the gift of forgiveness and the assurance of eternal life. Twenty watching Marines stared in disbelief as Lance Corporal Jeff Guthrie asked the Lord Jesus to come into his life, right on the lawn of Saddam Hussein's Presidential Palace. The next morning was Palm Sunday. In Saddam Hussein's palace, in the courtroom of one of the century's most notorious villains, Jeff Guthrie was baptized. Carey Cash writes: "There before our eyes, the courts of evil had become nothing less than the courts of the Lord. A place that had been known for the presence of darkness and treachery had become a place of the presence of God...If God can deliver an isolated, cut-off battalion of U.S. Marines surrounded by enemies in the belly of the beast, can He not deliver us from the enemies that assail us in our daily lives?"

God goes to battle when your back is up against the wall. The Commander of the Hosts of Heaven wants you to call on His Name – Jehovah Sabaoth – when you are:

1. Oppressed
2. Overwhelmed
3. Outnumbered
4. Impoverished

Psalm 84:12 says, "O LORD Almighty [Jehovah Sabaoth], blessed is the man who trusts in you." Are you ready to trust in Him for the first time? If so, maybe you're ready right now to ask Jesus into your life. This past Thursday I was out at Pontiac Christian School to help serve pizza for hot lunch with my friend Dave. We had a great time, even though we were slow and made a mess. When we were done, I sat down at one of the tables to enjoy a big piece of cheese pizza. While I was sitting there, a group of three young students (in the first and second grade class) came up to me and said they wanted to talk to me in private. When the other kids around them heard this, they all came in closer so they could hear. After getting rid of these eavesdroppers, this trio came closer so we could talk. I put down my piece of pizza so I could give them my entire attention. One of them said, "You tell him." The other girl said, "No, you tell him." This banter went back and forth for quite awhile. Finally one of them said, "We want to ask Jesus to come into our hearts!" I smiled and said, "You mean all three of you want to become Christians right now?" They all chimed in and exclaimed, "Yes, right now." I took them into the secretary's office and explained the gospel message to them and then all three of them prayed out loud, telling Jesus they were sorry for their sins, and asked Him to come into their lives. When we were finished, two of them were literally jumping up and down. I told them to make sure and go back to their classroom and tell their Mrs. Schappaugh and Miss Litwiller what they had done. I watched as they skipped down the hallway eager to share the good news (to read more, check out my blog from 3/11/05: [www.pontiacbible.org/brian](http://www.pontiacbible.org/brian)).

If you're ready, would you pray this prayer with me? "Lord Jesus, for too long I've kept you out of my life. At times I've been oppressed, overwhelmed, outnumbered and I am spiritually impoverished I admit that I am a sinner and that I cannot save myself. I repent of my sins by changing my mind about the way I've been living. I believe and gratefully receive your pardon. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming to earth. With all my heart I believe you are the Son of God who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead on the third day. Thank you for bearing my sins and giving me the gift of eternal life. I open my heart to you right now and receive you into my life. Amen."

If you're already a born-again believer and have not followed the Lord in Baptism, I'd like to invite you to take the plunge along with about 10 others, on Sunday, May 1st. Please call the church office if you'd like to be added to the list.

If it would help you memorialize a decision today that you're making today, I'd like to invite to come down front during our closing song called, "[The Power and the Glory](#)"

#### Related Resources:

- [Jehovah Sabaoth, LORD of hosts \(of armies\)](#)
- [Jehovah Sabaoth: Pt 2](#)

**God Is My Banner**  
**Jehovah Nissi**

Brian Bill

Scripture: Exodus 17:15+

Summary: The name we are focusing on today is Jehovah Nissi, which means, "God is my Banner."

Today we conclude our sermon series called, "What God Goes By." Let's begin with a matching quiz to see how well you know the names of God.

1. Elohim	a. The Covenant Keeper
2. Adonai	b. God the Healer
3. Jehovah Shalom	c. The God Who is There
4. Jehovah Jireh	d. God of the Angel Armies
5. Yahweh	e. God the Creator
6. El Shaddai	f. God the Provider
7. Jehovah Shammah	g. God the Lord
8. Jehovah Rapha	h. The God of Peace
9. Jehovah Sabaoth	i. God the Almighty

(Answers: 1-e; 2-g; 3-h; 4-f; 5-a; 6-i; 7-c; 8-b; 9-d)

The name we are focusing on today is Jehovah Nissi, which means, "God is my Banner." It's been really neat to have banners posted in the auditorium during this series to help us remember how He has revealed himself. There's something about seeing God's name high and lifted up that reminds us of His presence, His power and His peace. Some of you may wonder why we've camped in the Old Testament for so long. I've even heard someone say that we've been spending too much time in the first part of the Bible. Let me address that concern. We've tackled this topic for at least four reasons.

We all need to get to know God better. By learning His names, we'll be able to call upon Him. According to Psalm 75:1, "His name is near."

The entire Bible is inspired by God. We need to remember that according to 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

Jesus fulfills the Old Testament. Jesus said in Matthew 5:17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Each name of God has its fulfillment in Christ.

The Old Testament stories serve as "examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did...and were written down as warnings for us..." (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11). Romans 15:4 also elevates the importance of the Old Testament: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Ray Stedman writes: "The Old Testament is really the richest commentary ever written on the New Testament. If you are... beginning to fail and your heart finds itself in the grasp of doubt, then turn to the record of God at work in the Old Testament."

By the way, after Easter we will launch a new sermon series called "A Journey to Joy." This study will be a verse-by-verse exposition through the New Testament book of Philippians.

In order to understand and appreciate Jehovah Nissi, let's look at how this name was first used. Two weeks ago when we studied Jehovah Rapha, we learned in Exodus 15 that the people of Israel went from praising to protesting. They sang and then they got sour because they didn't have any water. When they finally found some water, it was bitter, but when Moses threw a piece of wood into it, it became better. In chapter 16, the Israelites commence their complaining again, this time because they are hungry. Showing His grace and teaching them that He provides for their daily needs, God rained down bread from heaven each morning and for their evening meal he provided barbequed quail.

When we come to chapter 17, the people are on the move, and when they get to Rephidim, they become thirsty again. True to form, the Israelites immediately lash out at Moses one more time in verse 2: "So they quarreled with Moses and said, 'Give us water to drink.'" Then they start grumbling in verse 4 and accuse Moses of bringing them into the desert to kill them. Friend, if you find yourself grumbling and complaining, it could be a sign that some sourness has infected your spiritual life. Someone has said,

“Christians are like cars – when they begin to knock, there’s something wrong inside.” Ken Hemphill, who has written a wonderful book called, “The Names of God,” offers this perspective: “When we fail to see God’s hand in our daily affairs and to trust Him for our daily provision, we begin to fret and complain about our difficult circumstances” (Page 108).

Moses is exasperated and so he cries out to the Lord: “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.” God then instructs Moses to take some of the elders and go ahead of the people. When he comes to the rock at Horeb, he was to strike it with his rod, or staff. When he hit the rock, water flowed out of it. According to verse 7, this place was called Massah and Meribah, which are names that mean testing and quarreling. They were putting God to the test by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?” In essence they doubted Jehovah Shammah, the God who is there; and Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides.

### **The Significance of the Staff**

I have to pause here to make a point that I don’t want you to miss. The rod in Moses’ hand has special significance. In Exodus 4:2-4, God told Moses to throw the staff on the ground, and when he did, it became a snake. Moses ran away from it but God told him to pick it up by the tail. When he did, it turned back into a staff. This was a teachable moment for Moses as we read in verse 5: “This is so that you may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you.”

From then on, whenever Moses held up his staff, he was reminded of God’s powerful presence. Later Moses used this staff to send plagues upon the Egyptians, and it was with the staff that he struck the waters of the Nile and a clear path appeared for the Israelites. When they were safely on the other side, Moses stretched out his hand holding the staff and the waters returned, wiping out the Egyptians. And now this same staff was used to strike the rock.

This staff was not a magic wand but instead represented the holy hand and awesome arm of Yahweh, their covenant-keeping God. This was God’s way of showing them that He was with them and that He was going to do battle for them when their backs were up against the wall. Now, stay with me on this. God’s people were complaining and quarreling and rebelling. I’m sure that Moses wanted to take his staff and smack the belly-achers, but instead he was told to hit the rock. In one sense we could say that the people deserved to be hit by the rod of God, as we all do. Because we are sinners, we deserve the judgment that comes from the mighty arm of the Almighty. But instead of hitting them, God provided a substitute, and the rock was hit instead.

Let’s go back to 1 Corinthians 10:4: “...for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.” In other words, God was saying to Moses, “Take that staff and instead of striking them, strike the Savior for their sins.” That gives me spiritual Goosebumps! Way back in Exodus God is giving us a picture of the need for a substitutionary sacrifice. Jesus took the blows that are rightfully ours, absorbing the full force of God’s judgment. Now, keep the significance of the staff in your mind as we come to the second half of chapter 17.

### **The Attack of the Amalekites**

Verse 8 describes the dilemma that God’s people are about to face. They’ve been thirsty and hungry but now an enemy is ready to ambush them. While they are at Rephidim, getting refreshed, the Amalekites attack. The Amalekites were the descendants of Esau, and were the enemies of God and of God’s people. As we go through this encounter, it may help to view the Amalekites as representing the sin within our hearts and the evil one who continuously comes after us. When Moses sees that his people are about to be pummeled, he calls out to Joshua in verse 9: “Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.” Joshua made a careful, well-thought out choice to find the best men he could locate while Moses was up on the mountain. The people were to do what the Psalmist did in Psalm 121:1-2: “I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

This is a paradigm shift for God’s people. Up until now, God fought all their battles for them. The problem with this is that they became passive and then became complainers when God didn’t do things exactly the way they wanted. Now, they are told to be proactive and fight their enemies. The danger here is that they will have to remember that they cannot do anything in their own strength. They are to be proactive and not passive, yet they are to remember that God is their power. The same is true for us. We can’t just sit back and do nothing, nor can we do everything, but we must do something.

As we rely on His strength, taking steps of courage, He alone gets the glory and our faith in Him will grow. Instead of just being observers of God’s work, now they were being asked to be participants in God’s work. Oliver Cromwell, who fought for England over 300 years ago, had no military training but was very successful. He often pointed to the fact that God enabled him to win his battles. He is known to have said to his troops, “Trust in Providence and keep your powder dry.” We must do what we can but must always trust in God.

Picture the scene. Up to two million Israelites are trying to quench their thirst and now the Amalekites attack. Those in the front of the group are whetting their whistle and those in the back are very vulnerable. The Amalekites have gone out of their way to come

after God's people, because Rephidim isn't even close to where they live. The Amalekites want to take them out before they head to the land of Canaan. Satan does the same to us. He comes after us when we least expect him, and he'll go out of his way to knock us out, or knock us off stride. We know from Deuteronomy 25:17-18 that the Amalekites attacked when God's people were at their weakest point: "Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind..."

While Joshua is leading the battle below, Moses, Aaron and Hur are battling above them, at the top of a hill. Look at Exodus 17:11: "As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning." With the rod of God in his hand, Moses visibly demonstrated that it was the power of God fighting for them that gave them strength. As his hands are held in a posture of praise and adoration, the troops could trust that God was with them. The staff symbolized how God had come through for them before and He would do so again. It was the pledge of His presence.

When they looked to the mighty arm of Jehovah, they experienced victory, but when Moses got tired and started to drop his hands, the Amalekites made advances. Here's the principle. They were to fight with all their might, but they were to never take their eyes off Jehovah. They were God's soldiers, fighting under His command. In verse 12, Aaron and Hur help Moses when he got tired. They found him a stone to sit on and then propped up his hands so they remained steady until sunset. As a result, verse 13 tells us that Joshua overcame the Amalekites. In verse 14, Moses is told to write everything down and to make sure Joshua hears about it. This word "hears" literally means "to put in the ear." The King James Version captures the idea: "Rehearse it in the ears of Joshua."

The rod of God became the focal point for God's people as they fought. Opposing armies would often fly a flag on a pole at their front lines to rally the troops. I remember seeing how prominent the different flags were during the Revolutionary War reenactments when we visited Williamsburg. When the flag moved, the troops moved. And when the flag fluttered in the wind, the soldiers took courage. Flags give hope and they also bring the army together with a sense of unity.

In Old Testament times, people often did not have actual cloth flags but would just use a pole, or a staff as their banner, although Numbers 2:2 states that "The Israelites are to camp around the Tent of Meeting some distance from it, each man under his standard with the banners of his family." Just like every country today has a flag, so too, the 12 tribes of Israel used banners to identify and rally the troops.

I'm part Irish so I wore green on Thursday (show flag) and I'm also part Polish so I wore two different colored socks today (show flag). Here's the American flag (show flag) and the Pakistan flag (show flag). All of our states even have flags (show Illinois and Wisconsin). The flag has no power itself, but it signifies that the soldiers who are fighting have behind them one whose power and resources are at their disposal. When believers gather under the banner of God, we are saying that we have God's power and resources available to us.

After the victory was won by the Israelites over the Amalekites, Exodus 17:15 says that "Moses built an altar and called it THE LORD IS MY BANNER." [Jehovah Nissi] Moses recognized that the battle was won only because they fought under the Lord's banner. Look at verse 16: "For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD." When the Lord's banner is lifted up, we will be victorious.

- Psalm 20:5: "We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the LORD grant all your requests."
- Psalm 60:4: "But for those who fear you, you have raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow."
- Song of Songs 2:4: "He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love."

## Principles to Apply

I see at least four truths that we can learn from the name Jehovah Nissi.

### 1. Victory isn't always quick but it should be the norm for every believer.

Some of us have struggled for years with certain sins. Just like the Israelites had to battle all day against the Amalekites, so too, we often have to tackle trials and temptations for a long time before we begin to see victory. Having said that, some of us have given up, or given in, because we don't think we can ever experience freedom. The Bible is clear that we are victors because of what Christ has done for us. Claim the truth of Romans 8:37: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." One commentator says that we are "hyper-conquerors." Psalm 60:12: "With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies." 1 John 5:4: "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith."

### 2. We must intercede in prayer and proceed in obedience.

Moses provided intercession on the mountain and God provided intervention in the valley. We must work hard and pray hard.

Someone put it this way: "Pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended upon you." 1 Timothy 6:12 reminds us that we are to be active participants: "Fight the good fight of the faith" and Proverbs 21:31 provides the other half: "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD."

### **3. We need friends who will battle with us and pray for us.**

You have been designed to be in community with others because life is way too difficult to do by yourself. If you're not in a small group, make plans to join one. If your teenager is not coming to Student Impact, do what you can to encourage them to come. That reminds me of the story told about a Christian who had stopped attending church services. After a few months the pastor decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening, and the pastor found his parishioner at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for the pastor's visit, the member welcomed him, led him to a comfortable chair near the fireplace and waited. The minister made himself at home, but said nothing. After several minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth, all alone. Then he sat back in his chair, still silent. His host watched all of this in quiet contemplation. As the one, lone ember's flame flickered and diminished, there was a momentary glow, and its fire was no more. Soon, it was cold and dead. Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. The minister glanced at his watch, slowly stood up, picked up the cold, dead ember, and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately, it began to glow once more, with all the light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said, "I'll be back in church Sunday."

We need each other's support because many of us are carrying burdens that are too heavy to bear alone. Moses needed the strength of others in order to pray. The troops needed each other to battle. As you look around, is there someone who needs you to help lift their tired arms? Do you need help reigniting your prayer life? If you're losing ground to the enemy, it may be because you've stopped praying.

### **4. Focus on memorials to help you remember.**

When God defeated the Amalekites, the first thing Moses did was write down what happened in a book. This is an important principle. If you don't keep a journal, you may want to begin recording God's work in your life. Next, he built an altar. He did this as a memorial, so he and his people would never forget. I can think of four memorials that are designed to jog our memory today.

Palm Sunday. We remember today that Jesus came into Jerusalem and was met by a throng who praised Him with branches. Matthew 21:8 tells us "...others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road." This was a common way to welcome a victorious King when he would return from battle. These palm branches were also a symbol of joy and victory and were placed on graves as a sign of eternal life. Since they often grew out in the desert near water, palm trees were a sign that life-giving activity was near. By laying palm branches on the road, the people were signifying that Jesus was the victorious King who gives eternal life to those out wandering in the desert of life.

The Cross. On Friday we remember that Jesus was nailed to a wooden rod and that He died in our place. One of the most famous banners in the Old Testament is found in Numbers 21. Once again the people are complaining and grumbling but this time they face another danger when poisonous snakes begin to bite them and they start to die. After confessing their sin to Moses, the Lord told Moses to make a "fiery serpent" and put it on a pole. Whoever looked at this "banner" would live. Jesus picks up on this picture in John 3 when Nicodemus begins to ask questions about how to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus tells him that he must be "born again" and then in order to drive home the point, Jesus references this event in verses 14-15: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." Jesus is Jehovah Nissi, the banner of salvation. He was lifted up on a piece of wood on a hill, bringing victory over sin and Satan, and those who look to Him will be saved.

Colossians 2:15 is a wonderful picture of Christ's triumphant victory: "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." The word for "disarmed" is literally "stripped," as in stripping a defeated enemy of armor on the battlefield. The powers and authorities of this evil world stripped Christ of his clothing and popularity, made a public spectacle of him on the cross, and thought they had triumphed over him by putting Him to death. Little did they know that the victory actually belonged to Jesus. We'll celebrate that on Easter Sunday! Friends, evil no longer has any power over you because Christ has stripped Satan's weapons and he is now disarmed.

The cultural background to this verse is rich with meaning. When the Romans went off to fight their enemies, after winning the war, they would bind their vanquished foes together by the hands and march them single file back to Rome where they would have a huge celebration. Thousands of Romans would line the streets to watch this "public spectacle." At the front of the parade would be the conquering General. Following him would be those soldiers who had acted heroically in battle. The rest of the army would follow. And then at the rear of the procession would be all those who had been conquered. As they would march past the crowds, the people would jeer at them, cast insults, and even throw things. You didn't want to be the main attraction at one of these public



spectacles!

Jesus has turned those who thought they were captors into captives, displaying them in His victory celebration. We don't have to succumb to sin or fear Satan. Jesus is our banner and He has triumphed at the cross. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Communion. One reason we are told to celebrate the Lord's Supper is so we will never forget what Jesus has done for us. It's a time to remember. I hope you're planning to attend our special "Christ in the Passover" service on Good Friday. It will begin at 6:00 p.m. and we'll conclude by celebrating communion.

Baptism. Another symbol that helps us remember is the ordinance of Baptism. As individuals are lowered into the water, they are symbolizing the death of Christ, and as they come up out of the water, they are proclaiming that Christ is alive. Our next service will be held on Sunday, May 1st. We already have 12 people signed up. Call the church office if you're ready to take the plunge.

Let me ask you a question. Whose flag are you flying today? Are you rallied around Jehovah Nissi or are you flying the flag of "me?" I don't know what you are going through or who your Amalek is, but God will give you the victory if you look to Him. But only if you will wave the white flag of surrender. Atlanta courthouse shooting suspect Brian Nichols finally surrendered after the woman he took hostage read the Bible to him and a chapter from the Purpose Driven Life book. He literally waved a white flag to indicate that he was ready to give up. Are you ready to surrender to the Savior right now?

When Jesus is lifted up, when His banner is over us, there can be no rivals to His throne. I received an email this week that shows the victory that Jesus has won over the hearts of people all around the world. (I removed the gentleman's name for his protection but have left the grammar the way it is):

- "hello brian bill
- i am...from pakistan
- i came to a website and read your sermon on the john 1:1
- as i read it i feel some thing changing my heart and when i read what max lucado wrote about the cave i think in my life i was in that cave and your sermon was the voice and my life has changed i am amuslim when i make comparison with islamic teachings i found what you wrote the perfect and jesus the right way i want to believe in jesus
- can you please send me some books to read about jesus more and more
- please give me reply"

When this Muslim man figured out who Jesus was, and that He is raised up as a banner, his life changed. Jesus Nissi is the right way, and the only way. His banner over you is love. Are you ready to be changed? Will you surrender to Him and follow His flag for the rest of your life?

I'd like to close by reading something called, "The Christian's Horizon."

What do I see as I look back?

Millions of mercies along life's track;  
God's love shining where all was black;  
That's what I see looking back.

What do I see as I look within?

A heart by my Savior redeemed from sin;  
A hope, through His grace, heaven's joys to win;  
That's what I see, looking to Him.

What do I see looking forth today?

Blessings granted before I pray;  
A sheltering arm, a guiding ray,  
That's what I see, looking at today.

What do I see as I look on?

Burdens lifted and trials gone;  
A light at every, surpassing dawn;  
That's what I see, looking on.

What do I see as I look above?

God's own banner, whose name is love;  
Love unspeakable, wonderful love;  
That's what I see when I look above.

**Related Resources:**

- [Jehovah Nissi: The LORD Our Banner](#)
- [Jehovah Nissi: Exposition of Exodus 17:8-16](#)