



KNOW GOD

DEVOTIONAL STUDY GUIDE

INTRODUCTION TO Know God

In times of suffering, people often ask the question, "Where is God? Where is God in the midst of my pain?" It's a normal, natural question to ask. And the Bible has an answer. The answer of Scripture is - WITH us. God is with us in our pain. God is with us in our suffering. God is with us.

So that leads to a second question: "Who is this God? And how can I know Him?"

The Bible reveals that our God is powerful, merciful, compassionate, gracious and loving. Our God is with us and for us in every moment, every circumstance, every situation that we face. We are never alone and God will give us everything we need.

Throughout the pages of Scripture, God reveals Himself by a number of names. These names help us know God. However, these names can also be difficult to identify or understand, simply by paging through an English translation of the Bible.

In this study, each name of God is presented in English (along with its rendering in Hebrew). Each section includes a key Scripture passage revealing the name, helpful background information, and Bible study questions.¹

When studying the names of God, it helps to realize that names in the ancient world in which the Bible was written often functioned differently than they do today. In addition to distinguishing one person from another and linking people to their family heritage, names were thought to reveal the essential nature and character of a person. This is particularly true when it comes to the various names and titles of God revealed in Scripture. Furthermore, it was thought that to know God's name was to enjoy a kind of privileged access to him. Once his people knew his name, they could cry out to him, claiming his help and protection. But God's self-revelation also introduced a note of vulnerability. By associating his name so closely with a particular people, he risked the possibility that they would dishonor it by behaving in ways that contradicted his character.

This study rests on the premise that we can experience God in fresh ways by encountering his names in the Scriptures and by learning about the biblical and cultural context in which they were revealed.

As we call on God by name, we can start to **Know God**.

¹ Some content taken from *The Names of God: 52 Bible Studies for Individuals and Groups* written by Ann Spangler. If you would like to study these ideas further, we highly recommend this book!

GUIDELINES

for Small Group Leaders

Thank you so much for serving as a Small Group leader! We believe that Small Groups are one of the best tools at our disposal to END RELATIONAL POVERTY. As we gather together to share life and learn from God's Word, we will be connected like never before.

Please use this guide to help you in your leadership. Don't feel like you have to follow it like a script. Make your group your own! But please do be sure to always cover the basics - conversation, Bible, and prayer. Those three are essential ingredients to a vital small group.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to Jonathan, Dave, or Becca anytime.

Guidance for Leading

1. When you get the names of your group members, send a group email to introduce yourself as their leader. Share your best contact information and encourage them to do the same with a reply-all email. Though groups will primarily be meeting via Zoom, it will likely be helpful to connect through email, text and phone as well throughout the 7 weeks.
2. Setup your Zoom meeting ahead of time. Email the link out to your members and make sure they all know the time you're gathering. Sign on to Zoom yourself 5 - 10 minutes before everyone else to make sure you're there and ready when they show up. (If you need Zoom support from one of the staff, please let us know ASAP. We're happy to help!)
3. Some people in your group may be unfamiliar with online meetings. It will help to give a few initial tutorials and reminders. For example, you may have to remind people to mute their microphones when they aren't speaking or to turn off their cameras when moving around. Encourage people to have the cameras pointed at their faces throughout the meeting so you can all make eye-contact as you're sharing time together.
4. *Open your small group with prayer. You can pray extemporaneously or use this prayer: 'Lord Jesus, please be with us as we open up Scripture together. Help us to hear you speaking to us today, and help us to get to know one another better. We ask this in your holy name. Amen.'*
5. If you're meeting for the first time, or if someone new has joined you, have everyone introduce themselves. (You also might want to do this more than once!)
6. It's a good practice to start out with some ice-breaker questions, something to get people talking and conversation rolling. Start with that and spend about 10 - 15 minutes or so with it.

(If you're new to leading a group, you'll discover that time often goes very quickly! Keep an eye on the clock to make sure you get plenty of time to discuss Scripture.)

7. Then have someone read the assigned Bible passage for that week out loud. That will keep it fresh in everyone's mind.
8. Spend the balance of your time together talking about the passage. There are several discussion questions in your guide. We know that every group is different; feel free to choose the questions that relate best to your group.
9. About 5 - 10 minutes before you're going to wrap up, you can bring a stop to your discussion. Ask if anyone has prayer requests and conclude by praying together for what has been shared.
10. Have fun! Make new friends! Enjoy being a part of a small group in a new way! And be sure to share your stories of ways you're seeing relational poverty come to an end!

Week One: June 14 - 20

WHERE IS GOD? / WHO IS GOD?

In times of suffering, people often ask: "where is God?" When we are in pain, it's natural and normal to ask such a question. And the answer of Scripture is that God is WITH us. So that lead to a second question - "who is this God? And how do I know him?"

Our God is powerful, merciful, compassionate, gracious and loving. Our God is with us and for us in every moment, every circumstance, every situation that we face. We are never alone, and God will give us everything we need.

Key Scripture

Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. - Hebrews 4:14-16

God reveals his presence in Scripture

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

² *"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*

³ *Gird up your loins like a man,*

I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

⁴ *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?*

Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ *Who determined its measurements—surely you know!*

Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ *On what were its bases sunk,*

or who laid its cornerstone

⁷ *when the morning stars sang together*

and all the heavenly beings^[a] shouted for joy?

⁸ *"Or who shut in the sea with doors*

when it burst out from the womb?—

⁹ *when I made the clouds its garment,*

and thick darkness its swaddling band,

¹⁰ *and prescribed bounds for it,*

and set bars and doors,

¹¹ *and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther,*

and here shall your proud waves be stopped'?

¹² *"Have you commanded the morning since your days began,
and caused the dawn to know its place,
¹³so that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,
and the wicked be shaken out of it?*

Then Job replied to the Lord:

² *"I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
³'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
⁴'Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me.'
⁵I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
⁶therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes."*
- Job 38:1-13; 42:1-6

Understanding the Scripture

The book of Job is nestled in the poetic section of the Old Testament - the Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs - and it serves as a fable of sorts, a way of fleshing out the problem of evil and suffering. The book of Job asks, "What do we say about God in light of the reality of pain in our world?"

For Job himself faced great suffering. At the point in the story where we're going to jump in, he has literally lost everything: his health, his family, and all his possessions. *"My plans have shattered,"* Job laments at one point. At another he says, *"My safety vanishes like a cloud."*

In his suffering, Job questioned God. For the 30-some-odd chapters leading up to the passage we're going to read tonight, Job asks God over 200 questions. *"How long? Why me? Speak up! Make it stop! Where are you? What's going on?"* For 30-some-odd chapters, Job questions God and for 30-some-odd chapters God remains silent. Job's questions go unanswered.

But when God does finally respond, what Job ultimately learns is that God is God, God is good, and God is in control.

Furthermore, what we learn from the entire witness of Scripture is that, in our suffering, we are not alone. We have a God who is with us, who has experienced the depths of suffering for us, and we are never alone.

Studying the Scripture

1. Familiarize yourself with the story of Job and his many troubles (Job 1.1-2.10). What exactly does he experience? What is it about his troubles that makes him respond to God with such intense questioning?
2. What is the role of questioning or struggling in the Christian life? Do you think a person of deep faith asks questions or struggles?
3. Review the selected passage from Job above. How does God answer Job's questions? How do they represent a resolution to the story?
4. Hebrews talks about Jesus our 'high priest,' who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. Do you think Jesus can sympathize with us when we struggle or are challenged in our faith?
5. Have you ever struggled in life, and asked God 'why'? What, if anything, did you hear from God in response? If this time is in the past, how do you think about it now?

Close in Prayer (Ephesians 1:17-19 – Prayer to Know God)

We pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him, so that, with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we may know what is the hope to which he has called us, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

[illegible]

Week 2: June 21 - 27

THE LORD WILL PROVIDE

Yahweh Yireh

The Hebrew verb *ra'ah* (from which *yireh* is derived) means "to see." In this case, it is translated as "provide." Since God sees the future as well as the past and the present, he is able to anticipate and provide for what is needed. Interestingly the English word "provision" is made up of two Latin words that mean "to see beforehand." When you pray to *Yahweh Yireh*, you are praying to the God who sees the situation beforehand and is able to provide for your needs.

God Reveals His Name in Scripture

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, who you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there was a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

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. 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. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and the wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

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. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said, "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 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. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." - Genesis 22:1-14

Understanding the Name

Moriah, the site of Abraham's thwarted attempt to sacrifice his son, has been traditionally associated with the temple mount in Jerusalem. Today, Mount Moriah is occupied by a Muslim shrine called the Dome of the Rock. Jesus, whom John the Baptist called "the Lamb of God" is thought to have been crucified just a quarter mile away from Mount Moriah. It was there that *Yahweh Yireh* (yah-WEH yir-EH) provided the one sacrifice that would make our peace with him.

Studying the Scripture

1. Image that you are Abraham, making the three-day trip toward Moriah to sacrifice your son. What is in your heart?

2. Abraham was determined to obey the command to sacrifice Isaac. Why do you think he told his servants that he and his son would worship and then come back to them?

3. Compare the scene in which a ram is sacrificed in Isaac's place in this passage to John 1:29; "The next day John [the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "look the Lam of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

4. Why do you think God tests people?

5. What is the most difficult sacrifice the Lord has asked you to make? How did you respond?

6. In what ways has God provided for you? Think about the last week, the last month, the last year.

Close in Prayer (Ephesians 1:17-19 – Prayer to Know God)

We pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him, so that, with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we may know what is the hope to which he has called us, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

Passages for Continued Study

Deuteronomy 15:4-5; Matthew 6:28-30; 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; 1 Timothy 6:17-19

[illegible]

Week 3: June 28 - July 4

THE LORD IS MY BANNER

Yahweh Nissi

Ancient armies carried standards or banners that served as marks of identification and as symbols that embodied the ideals of a people. A banner, like a flag, was something that could be seen from afar, serving as a rallying point for troops before a battle. We know that banners were used in Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria and Persia, and the Israelites apparently carried them on their march through the desert. When you pray to *Yahweh Nissi*, you are praying to the God who is powerful enough to overcome any foe.

Key Scripture

*Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner,
He said, "For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD.
The LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation."
- Exodus 17:15-16*

God Reveals His Name in Scripture

The Amalekites came and attached the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, "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."

So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hand grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up – one on one side, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

*Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner. He said, "For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD. The LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation
- Exodus 17:8-16*

Understanding The Name

Unlike fabric flags, ancient banners were usually made out of wood or metal and shaped into various figures or emblems that could be fastened to a bare staff or a long pole. Depicting birds, animals, or gods, they often glistened brightly in the sun so that they could be seen from far off. A banner carried at the head of an army or planted on a high hill served as a rallying point for troops before battle or as an announcement of a victory already won.

Because banners embodied the ideals and aspiration so f whoever carried them, they aroused devotion to a nation, a cause, or a leader. When Moses held up the staff of God in the battle with the Amalekites, he was holding it like a banner, appealing to God's power. By building an altar and naming it *Yahweh Nissi* (yah-WEH nis-SEE), "The LORD is my Banner," he created a memorial of God's protection and power during the Israelites' first battle after leaving Egypt.

Studying the Scripture

1. The Amalekites were fierce enemies of the Israelites and the first to attack them after their liberation from Egypt (see Deuteronomy 25:17-19). As members of God's people, we face spiritual enemies intent on destroying God's plans and purposes for our lives. What are some of the enemies you face and how have you dealt with them?

2. What does it mean to engage in spiritual battles today? What difference would it make if you could say, like Moses, "The LORD is my Banner"?

3. Aaron and Hur helped Moses when he grew weary of holding up his hands. Has God ever sent others to help you in the midst of battle? Who and how?

4. What battles might you be trying to fight in your own strength?

5. How is Jesus God's banner of victory for us?

6. How might lifting high the cross of Christ help you to overcome?

Close in Prayer (Ephesians 1:17-19 – Prayer to Know God)

We pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him, so that, with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we may know what is the hope to which he has called us, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

Passages for Continued Study

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalms 20; 60:4; Song of Songs 2:4; Isaiah 11:10-12; 49:22-25;
John 3:14-15; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 15:52-57

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Week 4: July 5 - 11

GOD MOST HIGH

El Elyon

When applied to God, the term *Elyon*, meaning “Highest” or “Exalted One,” emphasizes that God is the highest in every realm of life. In the New Testament Jesus is known as the Son of the Most High while the Holy Spirit is the power of the Most High. All who belong to Christ are revealed as sons and daughters of the Most High by imitating the Father in heaven. When you praise the Most High, you are worshipping the One whose power, mercy and sovereignty cannot be matched

Key Scripture

*When that period was over, I, Nebuchadnezzar,
lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me.
I blessed the Most High,
And praised and honored the one who lives forever.
For his sovereignty is an everlasting sovereignty,
And his kingdom endures from generation to generation
- Daniel 4:34*

God Reveals His Name in Scripture

Belteshazzar (Daniel) answered [King Nebuchadnezzar], “My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your enemies!...This is the interpretation, O king, and it is a decree of the Most High that has come upon my lord the king: You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the wild animals. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, you shall be bathed with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and gives it to whom he will. As I was commanded to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be re-established for you from the time that you learn that Heaven is sovereign. Therefore, O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: atone for your sins with righteousness, and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that your prosperity may be prolonged.”

All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal place of Babylon, and the king said, “Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty?” While the words were still in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven: “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: The kingdom has departed from you! You shall be driven away from human society, and to eat grass like oxen, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to whom he will.” Immediately the sentence was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was drive away from human society, ate grass like oxen, and his body

was bathed with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew long as eagles' feathers and his nails became like birds' claws.

When that period was over, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me.

*I blessed the Most High,
And praised and honored the one who lives forever.
For his sovereignty is an everlasting sovereignty,
And his kingdom endures from generation to generation.*

- Daniel 4:19, 24—34

Understanding The Name

Elyon, the title given to the highest of the Canaanite gods, was appropriated by the Hebrews as a title for *Yahweh*. Emphasizing God's transcendence, the name *El Elyon* (EL el-YO(HN)) is first used in relation to Melchizedek, the king of Salem, who was also called "priest of God Most High" and who blessed Abraham in the name of "God Most High" (Genesis 14:18-20). The passage in Daniel regarding the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream illustrates what happens when human beings forget who is highest in heaven and on earth. In Daniel, the Aramaic word *Illaya* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *El Elyon* and is translated as "God Most High."

Studying the Scripture

1. What does the king's dream and Daniel's interpretation indicate about the source of Nebuchadnezzar's greatness and prosperity?
2. Nebuchadnezzar may have been stricken by a rare form of insanity in which a human being believes he is a particular kind of animal. Why do you think his boasting led to this kind of punishment?

3. What does Nebuchadnezzar's story reveal about the link between sanity and humility?
4. How have you been tempted to take credit for God's blessings? Think, for example, about any tendency to take credit for your career, the gifts God has given you, or even well-behaved children.
5. If the good things of this life are clouding your vision of who God is, identify what or who is "most high" in your life. Is it God or something else – a relationship, a job, plans for your children, a dream for your future?
6. What can you do to acknowledge God's greatness? Think of something specific you can do today?

Close in Prayer (Ephesians 1:17-19 – Prayer to Know God)

We pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him, so that, with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we may know what is the hope to which he has called us, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

Passages for Continued Study

Psalms 7:10; 57:2; 91:1-4, 9-10; 92:1-3; 97; 107; Isaiah 2:6-10; 55:8-9; Luke 6:27-36; Acts 1:1-11; Hebrews 1:3-4

[illegible]

Week 5: July 12 - 18

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

Yahweh Rohi

For at least part of their history, the Hebrews were a nomadic people, wandering from place to place and seeking pasture for their herds of sheep, goats, and cattle. To sustain their livelihood, it was vital for shepherds to keep their animals from straying, to protect them from thieves and wild animals, and to provide them with plentiful pastures. In the ancient Near East and in Israel itself, "shepherd" eventually became a metaphor for kings. The Hebrew Scriptures speak of God as the Shepherd of his people and apply this image to religious leaders as well.

The New Testament presents Jesus as the Good Shepherd, who protects the lives of his sheep by forfeiting his own life. When you pray to the Lord your Shepherd, you are praying to the One who watches over you day and night, feed you and leading you safely on the path of righteousness.

Key Scripture

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he restores my soul
He guides me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
- Psalm 23:1-3*

God Reveals His Name in Scripture

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters,
He restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness
For his name's sake
Even though I walk
Through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
For you are with me;
Your rod and your staff,
They comfort me.
You prepare a table before me*

*In the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.*

- Psalm 23

Understanding the Name

Shepherding was one of the earliest human occupations. A family's wealth was measured by how many sheep, goats, cows, horses, camels, and/or asses a man owned. Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David were all shepherds. Before David fought Goliath, he told Saul: "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it" (1 Samuel 17:34-35).

It was the shepherd's responsibility to count each animal in order to make sure none had gone astray. At night, sheep were kept in simple enclosures, in caves or within walls made from bushes. At times, the shepherd would sleep with his body lying across the gate to the enclosure in order to keep the sheep safe. Through Israel's religious leaders were also referred to as shepherds, they were often chided for their failure to watch over the flock of God. Both then and now Yahweh Roi (yah-WEH row-EE) is the one true Shepherd of his people.

Studying the Scripture

1. Read the first three sentences of this familiar psalm slowly, then close your eyes. Imagine that you are the sheep. What do you see? What do you feel.
2. What does it mean to "restore my soul"? Describe a time when you felt in need of such a restoration.

3. Read the fourth sentence slowly. Imagine again that you are the sheep. What do you see? What do you feel?

4. How has the Good Shepherd's rod and staff protected, guided, or corrected you? Have you found comfort in his rod and staff?

5. Why do you think the psalmist introduces the imagery of a table?

6. How would your experience of daily life change if you really believed that goodness and kindness would follow you all the days of your life?

Close in Prayer (Ephesians 1:17-19 – Prayer to Know God)

We pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him, so that, with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we may know what is the hope to which he has called us, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

Passages for Continued Study

Ezekiel 34; Isaiah 40:6-11; 53; John 10: 7-10, 14-18; Revelation 7:15-17

[illegible]

Week 6: July 19 - 25

THE GOD WHO SEES ME

El Roi

An Egyptian slave, Hagar encountered God in the desert and addressed him as *El Roi*, “the God who sees me.” Notably, this is the only occurrence of *El Roi* in the Bible.

Hagar’s God is the one who numbers the hairs on our heads and who knows our circumstances, past, present, and future. When you pray to *El Roi*, you are praying to the one who knows everything about you.

Key Scripture

She (Hagar) gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her:

“You are the God who sees me,”

For she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi

[“well of the Living One who sees me”].

- Genesis 16:13-14

God Reveals His Name in Scripture

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram, “The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.”

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering, I put my servant in your arms and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.”

“Your servant is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered.

Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."

The angel of the Lord also said to her:

*"You are now with child
and you will have a son
You shall name him Ishmael
for the LORD has heard of your misery.
He will be a wild donkey of a man;
his hand will be against everyone
and everyone's hand against him,
and he will live in hostility
toward all his brothers."*

She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi ["well of the Living One who sees me"]; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

*So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael - **Genesis 16:1-16***

Understanding the Name

In the ancient world it was not uncommon for an infertile wife to arrange for a slave girl to sleep with her husband so that the family could have an heir. In fact, Ishmael, the son born to Abraham and Hagar, would have been considered Sarah's legal offspring. Hagar and Ishmael might have fared better had Hagar not forgotten her place the moment she learned of her pregnancy. Still, Sarah's treatment of her seems inexcusable and harsh.

In the midst of her difficulties, Hagar learned that *El Roi* (EL Raw-EE) was watching over her and that he had a plan to bless her and her son. One of Abraham's grandsons, Esau, married Ishmael's daughter, and it was the Ishmaelite traders (also referred to as Midianite merchants in Genesis 37:26-28) themselves descended from an Egyptian slave, who transported his great-grandson Joseph into slavery in Egypt.

Studying the Scripture

1. Why do you think the angel of the LORD began his communication with Hagar by questioning her?

2. Describe what Hagar must have been feeling when she fled from Sarah into the desert. Now describe circumstances in your own life that may have produced similar emotions.
3. What gave Hagar the courage to go back to Sarah and face her again? How might Hagar's demeanor have changed after her encounter with the angel of the LORD?
4. What images come immediately to mind when you hear the name *El Roi*, "The God who sees me"?
5. Sarah tried to "force God's hand" in order to have a family. Describe a time when you thought God did not see your need and you were tempted to take matters into your own hands? What happened?
6. How have you seen God's mercy emerge from your bungled attempts to be in charge?
7. How have you experienced God's watchful care?

Close in Prayer (Ephesians 1:17-19 – Prayer to Know God)

We pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him, so that, with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we may know what is the hope to which he has called us, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

Passages for Continued Study

Genesis 21:1-21; Deuteronomy 12:28; 2 Chronicles 16:9; Psalms 33:13-22; 121:3, 5-8; Proverbs 15:3; Matthew 5:8; 6:3-4

[illegible]

Week 7: July 26 – August 1

I KNOW YOU BY NAME

The God who created us, sees us, provides for us, protects us, is powerful over us is the God who also knows us. God knows you by name. He knows everything about you and he loves you. And his deepest desire is that when you hear him calling you, that you would trust his voice and follow.

Key Scripture

*But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
- Isaiah 43:1*

God reveals His presence in Scripture

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.” - John 10:1-18

Understanding the Scripture

Have you ever been introduced to someone and then forgotten their name? It's always an awkward situation: you definitely know them, but you can't greet them by their given name, so you have to fall back on some other expression. 'Hey there, buddy!' 'Hey, you!' 'So nice to see you again!'

The Bible tells us that God has many names. Up until now this series has been focused on the names Scripture uses for God. In this final week, we turn everything around: we will now focus on the stunning reality that God calls *us* by name. Not only are we given many names with which to address God (and one name above all others: Jesus), we are assured throughout Scripture that God himself knows our name. And God knows more than that: God knows us through and through, as intimately as a best friend and as personally as a spouse. Usually in life we have intimate relationships with only a few, good friendships with a few more, and casual relationships with many. But not God: God knows each of us as if there were only one of us, and God loves each one of us as if we were the only person in the world.

Friends in Christ, rest in this encouragement: wherever you're at in life, whatever challenges you're facing, God knows you. And God cares about you. He is your shepherd who knows your name, and desires to protect and care for you all the days of your life. And if you walk with him, you will hear his voice speaking your name.

Studying the Scripture

1. Have you ever been introduced to someone, and then forgotten their name? Or have you been the one whose name someone else forgot? Share some stories about this uniquely embarrassing experience.
2. The fact that God knows our name indicates the ways in which God knows each of us intimately and personally. How does that idea sit with you? Does it make you feel excited or encouraged, uncomfortable or confused?

3. That God knows us by name implies not just intimate relationship but care. This comes out clearly in Jesus' parable of the good shepherd, who knows the names of his sheep because he cares for, provides for, and leads them. (Ultimately, of course, the good shepherd 'lays down his life for the sheep'.) God not only knows you personally but cares for you deeply: how does this fact affect your outlook on life? How might next week or next year be different for you if you claimed that truth more deeply?

4. Paoli Presbyterian Church's mission is 'ending relational poverty.' Another name for 'relational poverty' might be 'nobody knows my name.' Who is someone you know who needs somebody to know and care about them? Is there a concrete way you can show them love or care over the next few weeks?

5. John says that Jesus 'calls his own sheep by name.' Share about a time you've heard God speaking to you. What was the situation? What did you hear? Did you know it for sure at the time, or only in retrospect?

Close in Prayer (Ephesians 1:17-19 – Prayer to Know God)

We pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him, so that, with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we may know what is the hope to which he has called us, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

KNOW GOD

DEVOTIONAL STUDY GUIDE