



God's Names



SALLY MICHAEL

“The God she sees, savors, and sets forth here is unabashedly big.” —John Piper

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BY SALLY MICHAEL



P U B L I S H I N G

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Dedicated to my daughters,
son by marriage, and granddaughters.

Amy Jo—Beloved, Increasing Faithfulness
Kristina Lynne—Follower of Christ, Refreshing One
Gary Lee—Man of Loyalty, Gracious Spirit
Anna Hope—Gracious One, Hope
Katherine Joy—Pure, Joyful

May your names be remembered
by the Lord
forever.



And those who know your name
put their trust in you,
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken
those who seek you.

—Psalm 9:10

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Preface

For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.

—Psalm 33:21

The fruit of trusting in God is a “glad heart.” Here is the pathway to true joy. To those of us who have walked with the Lord for a season, He has repeatedly proved that He is worthy of our admiration and trust. He has sustained our joy in the ordinary days and in unanticipated trials as we look forward to the *joy that is set before us*.

But our children may not know the Lord, or may just be beginning their walk with Him. They have not yet learned the unfathomable trustworthiness of God. Nor have they seen the glory of His unequalled character. Their tentative steps can be strengthened through our teaching of who God is, and through the experience of looking to God to show them that He is true to what He says about Himself.

You have before you a mini-primer on the character of God as revealed by His names. It is meant to be an interactive dialogue between adult and child as you discover God’s character together. It is also intended to serve as a springboard for trusting God in everyday experiences as truth is applied in real life.

This book is a resource, but you, the parent, must focus your child’s eyes on God by looking to Him daily, giving your son or daughter an example of dependence on God. You must model your own belief that God’s name can be trusted and that He is worthy of our love and praise.

May the Lord bless your time together as you focus on God’s names, and may your name and your children’s names be remembered by the Lord forever.

Introduction

How to Use This Book

This book was written to give parents an opportunity to present solid truth to their children and to encourage real-life application of the truth.

Relational

Children receive more encouragement to learn when truth is presented by a trusted individual. Your positive, relational parent-child commitment will be a real benefit when you sit down together to read this book. Your time together over the Word should be positive, affirming, and loving.

Interactive

There is a greater impact when an individual discovers truth, instead of just hearing it presented. Many questions have been incorporated into the text of this book to encourage your child to wonder and think critically. The process of discovery will be circumvented if you don't give your child adequate time to think and respond. After asking a question, wait for a response. If your child has difficulty, ask the question a different way or give a few hints.

Questions and responses can be springboards for more questions and discovery as you interact with your child's mind and heart. The Holy Spirit is the real teacher, so depend on Him to give both you and your child thoughts and truths to explore together, and to bring the necessary understanding. Take the time to work through each story at a leisurely pace—giving time for interaction and further dialogue. The goal should be to get the material into the child, not just to get the child through the material.

Understandable

These stories have been written with attention given to explaining difficult or potentially new concepts. Some of these concepts may take time for your child to digest. Allow your child to ponder new truths. Read the story more than once, allowing the truth to be better understood and integrated to your child's theological framework. At times, have your child read parts of the lesson, giving an opportunity for visual learning.

Because vocabulary can be child-specific, define the particular words foreign to your child. Retell difficult sections in familiar wording, and ask questions to be sure your child understands the truth being taught.

Theological

More than just acquainting your child with the names of God, this book is building a biblical theology beneath your child. As your child begins to correctly understand who God is and how He interacts with the world, he or she won't just have a vague notion of God, but will be able to relate to the God of the Bible.

Because the Word of God has convicting and converting power, Bible texts are quoted word-for-word in some parts. Some of these verses may be beyond the child's understanding, so you may need to explain unfamiliar words or thoughts. Even though clear comprehension may be difficult, hearing the Word itself is a means the Holy Spirit can use to encourage faith in your child (Romans 10:17). Do not minimize the effectual influence of God's Word in the tender souls of children.

Since the Word of God is living and active, allow the child to read the Bible verses as much as possible. Also, encourage your child to memorize some of the verses so that he or she can meditate on them at other times.

The gospel is presented numerous times throughout the book. Use this as an opportunity to share God's work of grace in your life, and to converse with your child about his or her spiritual condition. Be careful not to confuse

spiritual interest with converting faith and give premature assurances to your child. Fan the flames of gospel-inspired conviction and tenderness toward the sacrificial love of Jesus without prematurely encouraging your child to pray “the sinner’s prayer.”¹

Application

Understanding the truth is essential, but insufficient. Truth must also be embraced in the heart and acted upon in daily life. Often, children cannot make the connection between a biblical truth and real-life application, so you, the parent, must help bridge the gap.

Consider the following quotation by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

We must always put things in the right order, and it is Truth first. . . . The heart is always to be influenced through the understanding—the mind, then the heart, then the will. . . . But God forbid that anyone should think that it ends with the intellect. It starts there, but it goes on. It then moves the heart and finally the man yields his will. He obeys, not grudgingly or unwillingly, but with the whole heart. The Christian life is a glorious perfect life that takes up and captivates the entire personality.²

Spend a few days or even a week on each name. Reread the story, discuss the truths, and follow the suggestions in the “Learning to Trust God” section. Most importantly, help your child to see that God is who He says He is, and to act in response to the truth. Point out God’s involvement in daily life and thank Him for being true to His name.

1. Some excellent resources for parents regarding the salvation of children can be found at www.childrenedesiringgod.org. Resources include a booklet, *Helping Children Understand the Gospel*; and two seminars from the 2007 conference, “‘How Great a Salvation’: Leading Children to a Solid Faith” and “Presenting the Gospel to Children.”

2. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 61–62.

Prayer

Ultimately, our efforts are effective only if the Holy Spirit breathes on our teaching and quickens it to the heart. Pray not only before going through the stories, but also in the succeeding days, that your child would see God's character and respond in faith to Him.

Note: We are using the concept of "name" loosely to refer to a name, title, or description.

Note: Although most scholars today prefer the translation *Yahweh* rather than *Jehovah* for the Divine Name, we are choosing to use *Jehovah* because this was more common during earlier times in the church's history. *Jehovah* is used in numerous hymns and has attained a long-standing place in our worship vocabulary. We do refer to both translations, but because of popular usage, *Jehovah* has been used in the compound names (e.g., *Jehovah-Shalom*) as well. For further discussion of this, reference: Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1996), 114–15.

Pronunciation Guide

Elohim (ěl ō hēm)
Jehovah, Yahweh (jě hō vŭ; yă wā)
El Shaddai (ěl shă dī)
El Elyon (ěl ěl yŏn)
El Kana (ěl kă nă)
Jehovah-El Emeth (jě hō vŭ ěl ě mět)
Adonai (ă dō nī)
El Roi (ěl rō ē)
Jehovah-Shammah (jě hō vŭ shă mă)
Jehovah Sabaoth (jě hō vŭ să bā ŏt)
Jehovah-Jireh (jě hō vŭ jī rŭ)
Jehovah-Or (jě hō vŭ or)
Jehovah-Shalom (jě hō vŭ shă lŏm)
Jehovah-Maginnenu (jě hō vŭ mă ģă ně new)
Jehovah-Rohi (jě hō vŭ rō hē)

ā = long a, as in “apron”
ă = short a, as in “apple”
ä = as in “father”
ē = long e, as in “see”
ě = short e, as in “egg”
ī = long i, as in “ice”
ō = long o, as in “open”
ö = short o, as in “oxen”
ů = short u, as in “umbrella”

Stressed syllables are in **bold** type.

Note: Most Hebrew words put the stress on the last syllable (e.g., not El **KA** na, but El ka **NA**). Two exceptions in this list include “Jehovah,” which has the stress on the second syllable, and “Rohi,” which has the stress on the first syllable.

Names, Names, Names

How many names do you have? Let's find out! There's your first name. First names are names such as Sam, Ruth, Shannon, and Carlos. What is your first name?

Then there is your last name, which tells what family you are a part of—Nelson, Steward, Garcia, or Kasahara. What is your last name?

Some people also have a middle name. Do you?

But you have more names than this. Other names are called “titles”—like “son,” or “daughter,” or “sister.” Does your family use those name-titles for you? Does Dad ever call you “Son”? Do your brothers or sisters ever call you “Sis” or “Bro”? Maybe you have even gotten a letter calling you “Mr.” or “Miss.”

Then there are the fun names! They are the special names that people who love you call you—“Sweetie” or “Pumpkin” or “Buster.” These are called “nicknames.”

Some nicknames are just a shorter way of saying your name—like using “Will” for “William.” Other nicknames show something about you—like calling someone with red hair “Red,” or calling someone “Speedy” because he runs really fast. Do you have any nicknames?

Usually a nickname describes you, or reminds you of something that happened to you, or says something about the kind of person you are. If you won a race, someone might give you the nickname “Champ”—short for “Champion.” If you are smart, you might be called “The Brain.”

To have ten names would be a lot! How many names do you have? Let's count them.

Sometimes there is a special reason that we have the first or middle name we have. Maybe you are named after someone who is loved by your parents—a grandfather, or an aunt or uncle. Sometimes there are clever reasons for choosing

a name. If Mr. Joel and Mrs. Jackie chose “J” names for their children—Julia and Jesse—we could call them the “J”s!

Sometimes parents choose names with meanings because they want their children to grow up to be like the meaning of the names—such as Anna Hope and Katherine Joy. “Christina” means “follower of Christ,” so parents might choose that name because they pray that their daughter would follow Jesus.

Why do you think your name was chosen for you?

Many names in the Bible mean something. “Eve” means “the mother of all living things.” Why do you think she was named that?

God changed Abram’s name to “Abraham,” which means “father of a multitude of nations.” The name “Abraham” showed God’s plan for Abram’s life. Jesus



changed Simon Peter's name to "Peter," which means "rock." Peter was not always strong like a rock. Can you think of some times when he was not like a rock? But Jesus changed Peter into a strong, rocklike man who was not afraid to preach about Jesus even when he was put in jail for his preaching.

Now, here is a very hard question. How many names do you think God has?

20 names? No, not enough!

50 names? Still not enough!

How about 100 names . . . this is STILL NOT ENOUGH!

The one true God of the Bible has MORE THAN 200 names!¹ And if you were to count all the names, titles, and nicknames of God in the Bible, there are more than 700 names!

Wow!

Why do you think God has so many names?

Remember that a name in the Bible tells something about the person. God is so big . . . so GREAT, SO WONDERFUL, that it takes more than 700 names to tell what He is like! All His names have meanings—wonderful meanings that show how big and great and wonderful God is.

The Bible says, "And those who know your name put their trust in you" (Psalm 9:10).

Why do you think that knowing God's names will help you to trust Him—to know that He is strong and good and in control of all things, and able to take care of the whole world and everyone in it?

Would you like to learn some of these wonderful names of God? In this book we will learn only a small number of the many names of God, but every name we learn will tell us a little more about who God is and what He is like.

1. While God is called by many names in the Bible, He gives a special significance to the name Yahweh/Jehovah, often translated as "the LORD" (see Exodus 6:3).

Little by little by little, you will see how big and how great and HOW WONDERFUL GOD IS.



LEARNING TO TRUST GOD

- ✦ Look up Psalm 9:10 in your Bible. Read the whole verse and talk about it with your mom or dad.
- ✦ Ask God to help you to trust Him. Only God can give you a trusting heart. Ask God to help you to look for Him—to see every day that He is real and strong and good and wonderful.
- ✦ **Activity:** Find out why your name was chosen for you, and what your name means. Make a name card with your name and its meaning.