

BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE.

SMALL GROUPS

GOD IS...

THE NAMES OF GOD



KEN HEMPHILL

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"God" is not His only name.

You are probably known by different names. Those names reflect both your character and your relationships with those around you. For example, people who know me professionally call me Dr. Hemphill, yet others who know me personally call me Ken. My children call me Daddy and my grandkids call me Papa.

Not surprisingly, God has also been known by many names throughout the centuries.

The many names of God revealed in Scripture tell us much about His character. Those names invite us to know Him in a growing, intimate relationship. Knowing these names is important for three reasons:

- ▶ **God's name is inherently great.** "LORD, our Lord, how magnificent is your name throughout the earth!" (Ps. 8:1). Understanding the names of God will enable us to praise and worship Him more effectively.
- ▶ **God's name protects and benefits us.** "The name of the LORD is a strong tower" (Prov. 18:10). God's various names can be a tremendous aid to effective and specific prayer.
- ▶ **We represent God's name and must bring honor to it.** God gave Ten Commandments, and one of those Commandments has to do with His name: "Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God" (Ex. 20: 7). This command means far more than avoiding its use in vulgar or slang expressions. It means the people of God must reflect His name or character in their lives.

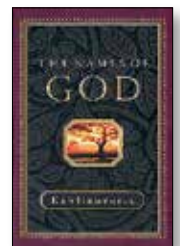
The names of God are a love gift to us. God reveals Himself *fully* so that we might experience His *fullness*. As we look at six of those names, we'll discover truths about the lovely character of our God.



Ken Hemphill

Ken is husband to Paula, father to three daughters, and grandfather to ten grandchildren. He is a pastor who is passionate about the church and God's Word. He has served in many capacities in Southern Baptist life and is a prolific author. He is currently the

Director for Church Planting and Revitalization at North Greenville University. Ken has authored numerous books, including *The Names of God*.



1

OUR PROVIDER



What's one of the hardest things you've been asked to do?

QUESTION #1

THE POINT

Trust God to meet our needs.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We've all made decisions to take on a daunting task, but it can be especially difficult when someone else makes that decision for you. The soldier who is "volunteered" for an assignment. The employee who is transferred to a new task or city. The student who is called on by the instructor to show the rest of the class how to solve "x." In those moments, our minds can be dominated by a single thought: *How am I going to do this?*

A few years ago, my wife, Paula, and I chose to move closer to our extended families. That might not seem like a hard decision, but things didn't fall together the way we expected. To make it even more challenging, my wife was diagnosed with cancer in the midst of the transition. We moved ahead, though, choosing to trust God and not our circumstances. We trusted and God provided.

When we look back, we can see God's hand at work. Our home has given us a quiet retreat—a wonderful healing place for Paula. God provides what we need, when we need it. Abraham knew this too. God truly is our Provider, and Abraham saw God's provision as he trusted Him during a great test of his faith.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Genesis 22:1-2

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he answered. ² “Take your son,” he said, “your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”

Abraham is commonly seen as a great example of someone who exercised strong faith. (See Heb. 11:8.) But Abraham’s journey wasn’t always easy. In fact, there were moments when he faltered:

- ▶ In his fear, Abraham claimed Sarah was not his wife—twice! (See Gen. 12:12-13; 20:1-3.)
- ▶ In his doubt, Abraham attempted to “help” fulfill God’s promise through having a son by Sarah’s slave Hagar. (See 18:1-3.)

In Genesis 22, Abraham faced his greatest test of faith. Verse 1 begins with an interesting phrase that is easy to overlook: “After these things.” Moses, the writer of Genesis, wanted us to think back over Abraham’s long journey that had led him from Ur of the Chaldeans to this very conversation with God.

God called to Abram when he was 75 years old (see Gen. 12:4), instructing him to leave his land, his relatives, and his father’s house—everything that was familiar and comfortable. In return, God promised to bless Abram by making him into a great nation that would bless all the nations of the earth. (See v. 2.) This was problematic because Abraham had no children and his wife, Sarah, was barren. Even so, “Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (15:6).

Abraham eventually did have a son, Isaac, although it took 25 years for God’s promise to be fulfilled. (See 21:1-7.) Genesis 22 took place several years after Isaac’s birth.

What’s your initial reaction to these verses?

QUESTION #2

Given Abraham's story, God's command in verse 2 is difficult to understand: "Take your son ... your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Notice God's detailed description of Isaac: "your son ... your only son Isaac, whom you love." This wasn't simply "a son" God required of Abraham. It was *his only son*. It was Isaac, the son *whom you love*. This son was not only dear to Abraham, he was essential to God's promises concerning the blessing of the nations—yet he was about to be offered as a sacrifice.

How do Abraham's actions in these verses demonstrate faith?

QUESTION #3

Genesis 22:3-10

³ So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you." ⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together. ⁷ Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, "My father." And he replied, "Here I am, my son." Isaac said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" ⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Then the two of them walked on together. ⁹ When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

We can hear Abraham's faith in his instructions to the young men: "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then *we'll* come back to you" (emphasis added). How could he be so confident? The writer of Hebrews gave us insight into Abraham's thoughts as he took his son to Mount Moriah: "He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead; therefore, he received him back, figuratively speaking" (Heb. 11:19). Abraham was convinced that God, who had already performed one miracle by putting life into a barren womb, could raise Isaac from the dead. In short, Abraham had arrived at a point in his faith journey where he was confident he could trust God with his most valued possession: his only son.

The text gives us no clue as to how much time passed between verses 8 and 9. Having arrived at the place God designated, Abraham built the altar and arranged the wood in preparation for the sacrifice. This work might have taken considerable time, and I've often wondered if any additional dialogue passed between Abraham and Isaac. The text is silent. We are only told with utter simplicity that Abraham "bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood," and then raised his knife to kill his beloved son.

Just reading the account leaves us nearly breathless. There's no doubt Abraham was committed to obey the command of God. Yet we should understand that Abraham's actions were based on his understanding of God's character. Our circumstances never test the faithfulness of God; they only test our understanding of His character and purpose.



When have you experienced a time of testing?

QUESTION #4

Genesis 22:11-14

¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” He replied, “Here I am.” ¹² Then he said, “Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me.”

¹³ Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham named that place The LORD Will Provide, so today it is said: “It will be provided on the LORD’s mountain.”

This place of divine encounter became sacred for Abraham, and so he called it “The LORD Will Provide.” This is the literal translation of the name *Jehovah Jireh*. The Hebrew word *jireh* can be translated “to see.” We may wonder what the connection is between “seeing” and “providing.” We can make the connection with the English noun “provision,” a compound made up of two Latin words which when taken together mean “to see beforehand.” God’s pre-vision leads to His provision. God knew before Abraham ever reached Moriah that he would need a sacrifice; therefore, God personally provided the ram.

This is an amazing picture of salvation. Before the foundation of the world, God had prior vision of man’s sin and rebellion. Seeing our need, He made provision for our redemption by providing a lamb of sacrifice—Jesus, “his one and only Son” (John 3:16).

Notice that it was Abraham’s obedience that unleashed God’s blessings in his life. (See Gen. 22:16-18.) For us as well, obedience is the key to growing faith. James spoke to this issue with great clarity when he compared those who hear God’s Word and refuse to act with those who hear and do act. The latter will be blessed in what they do. (See Jas. 1:23-25.)

If you desire to unleash God’s blessing in your life—if you want to discover that God is your Provider—then obey His Word. Obey immediately and without reservation, and see all that God will provide.

How can our actions and attitudes demonstrate that we serve the God who provides?

QUESTION #5

OUR PROVIDER

When it comes to trusting God to provide for your needs, how well do you do? On the following scale, circle where you would most often identify your level of trust.

Physically:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(Not very trusting) (Very trusting)

Emotionally/Relationally:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(Not very trusting) (Very trusting)

Spiritually:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(Not very trusting) (Very trusting)

What are some specific ways you recognize that God has provided for you recently?

"If God sends us on strong paths,
we are provided strong shoes."

—CORRIE TEN BOOM

LIVE IT OUT

God will use challenging circumstances to lead us to a deeper understanding of His ability to provide for our needs. How will you apply these truths this week? Consider these suggestions:

- ▶ **Identify your Isaac.** What circumstance, person, or thing are you having the most difficulty placing in God's care? Pray this week for the faith necessary to let go.
- ▶ **Place your Isaac on the altar.** Abraham had to first gather the resources necessary to make a sacrifice before he could find God's provision. Identify concrete steps you can take to place your "Isaac" in God's care.
- ▶ **Look for God's provision.** Write down the ways God provides for you this week. Make known to others the good things God is providing in your life.



You can experience a breakthrough in your faith walk when you are willing to trust God with those things you hold most precious. Make that decision today and trust *Jehovah Jireh*, the God Who Provides.

My thoughts