

ELOHIM
JEHOVAH
ADONAI
JEHOVAH NISSI
JEHOVAH TSABA
JEHOVAH ROHI
JEHOVAH JIREH
EL ELYON
EL SHADDAI
JESUS
IMMANUEL

THE POWER OF GOD'S NAMES

THE CREATOR GOD
THE RELATIONAL GOD
THE GOD WHO RULES
THE LORD MY BANNER
THE LORD OUR WARRIOR
THE LORD MY SHEPHERD
THE LORD OUR PROVIDER
THE MOST HIGH GOD
LORD GOD ALMIGHTY
THE GOD WHO SAVES
GOD WITH US

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

TONY EVANS

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THE AUTHOR

Dr. Tony Evans is one of America's most respected leaders in evangelical circles. He is a pastor, a best-selling author, and a frequent speaker at Bible conferences and seminars throughout the nation.

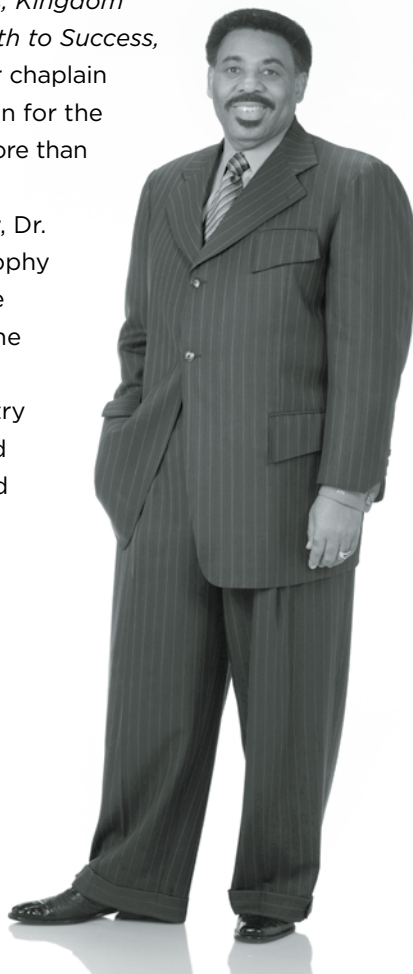
Dr. Evans has served as the senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship for more than 35 years, witnessing its growth from 10 people in 1976 to more than 9,000 congregants with more than one hundred ministries.

Dr. Evans also serves as the president of The Urban Alternative, a national ministry that seeks to bring about spiritual renewal in America through the church. His daily radio broadcast, "The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans," can be heard on nearly one thousand radio outlets throughout the United States and in more than one hundred countries.

Dr. Evans has authored more than 50 books, including *Oneness Embraced*, *The Kingdom Agenda*, *Marriage Matters*, *Kingdom Man*, *Victory in Spiritual Warfare*, *God's Unlikely Path to Success*, and *The Power of God's Names*. Dr. Evans, a former chaplain for the NFL Dallas Cowboys, is currently the chaplain for the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, a team he has served for more than 30 years.

Through his local church and national ministry, Dr. Evans has set in motion a kingdom-agenda philosophy of ministry that teaches God's comprehensive rule over every area of life, as demonstrated through the individual, family, church, and society.

Dr. Evans is married to Lois, his wife and ministry partner of more than 40 years. They are the proud parents of four—Chrystal, Priscilla, Anthony Jr., and Jonathan.



INTRODUCTION

Like any healthy Christian, you want to know God. You want to really know Him, not just know about Him. And to increase your intimacy with God, you've worked to encounter Him in several different ways. You've studied His Word. You've prayed. You've worshiped Him. You've built relationships with His children in the church. All these are good activities that can help you know God better.

But let me ask you a simple question: Do you know God's name? That's not a trick question. As modern Christians, we have many ways of addressing God. We understand Him in terms of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We recognize Him as our Creator. We speak the name of Jesus, and we proclaim Him to be Christ, our Savior and Lord. These titles certainly belong to God. However, many Christians today have little knowledge of God's other names.

In Scripture names often convey a sense of purpose, authority, nature, and character. In fact, a name was often used in the Bible almost as an equivalent to a person or a thing. The name of a thing carried almost as much weight as the thing itself. That's why when Jesus said He'd made God's "name known to them, and will make it known" (John 17:26), He was talking about more than just the word *God*. Having come to earth in the flesh, Jesus unveiled God's heart, mind, will, character, and being—all through the revelation of His name.

Because of God's depth of character, He has a name to reflect His different attributes and capacities for relating to humanity. If I wrote a week's lessons on every name of God that appears in the Bible, this study couldn't hold them. We'd need volumes of studies. That's why I've decided to focus on several of God's primary names that are recorded in His Word, including Elohim, Jehovah, El Elyon, El Shaddai, Adonai, Immanuel, and more.

This study will show you that God has a name for any and every situation you find yourself in. I encourage you to get to know the names of God, because in knowing His character and in understanding His ability to act in your situation, you'll learn to rest and discover peace and power in His covenant care.

By learning God's names, you can come to truly know Him.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

This Bible study book includes content for both individual and group study. The best way to learn God's kingdom names and character is to engage in individual, daily devotions and to participate in a Bible-study group that includes video teaching and discussion.

Each week's study begins with a suggested process for a group experience. Each group session should follow this general outline.

START. Begin each session with a brief time of discussion that helps you and your group get to know one another better and discuss what the Lord has taught you during the previous week.

WATCH. Your group will watch a 30-minute teaching segment on DVD while completing the viewer guide provided in each group experience.

RESPOND. Use the suggested questions to discuss the truths presented on the DVD. Then close each group experience with prayer. Each session wraps up with a key verse of Scripture to memorize and a specific challenge to tackle during the next week.

The teaching segment and group discussion will provide a foundation for your individual study throughout the week. Each day you'll read a devotion that fleshes out the Scriptures and ideas first presented in the group experience. You'll also complete personal learning activities that will help you understand the name of God selected for that week. If you complete each week's personal study, you'll arrive at your next group session ready to begin another discussion based on the individual work you've done.

Throughout these six sessions you'll learn more about God by studying a variety of His names in Scripture. As you examine the situations that gave rise to each name, you'll discover dimensions of God's ways and character that He chose to reveal to His people. Then you'll be guided to respond to what God is teaching you through your interaction with His names.

If you want to explore the names of God further after completing this study, read Tony Evans's book *The Power of God's Names* (Harvest House Publishers, 2014; ISBN 978-0-7369-3997-3).

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START

Welcome to this small-group discussion of The Power of God's Names.

To facilitate introductions and to focus on the theme of *The Power of God's Names*, discuss the following questions as a group.

- What was your most common nickname when you were growing up?
- How do you feel about your name? Why?
- What can you share about the meaning or background of your name?

What are some of the different names we use for God?

What do you hope to learn or experience in this study of God's names?

To prepare for the DVD segment, read aloud the following verses.

*O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!
From the mouth of infants and nursing babes
You have established strength
Because of Your adversaries,
To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.
When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?*

PSALM 8:1-4

WATCH

Complete the viewer guide below as you watch DVD session 1.

God's names are designed to give us clues into His _____.

Hallowed means set apart, unique, or _____.

God wants His name to be held in the unique _____ that it ought to occupy in our lives and in our world.

God's name is powerful; His name is tremendous because His name and names are _____.

Elohim: The Creator God

Elohim is _____—distinct from His creation; is responsible for _____; exists outside _____ and _____; is a _____; and interacts with _____ and _____.

El means _____.

We discover this great God in His _____ genius.

God has to bring _____ out of chaos.

We've been created in the _____ of God. We've been designed to _____ Him.

God has built in what He's going to do for us tomorrow by what He creates _____.

Elohim is _____ in His being and in His person.

God rested because He was _____.

There is a _____ that belongs to the people of God.

The powerful God, Elohim, is _____ for whatever is taking place in your life.

RESPOND

Use the following questions to discuss the DVD segment with your group.

What did you appreciate most in Dr. Evans's teaching? Why?

How have you sought to hallow God's name in private and in public?

How has our culture used and abused God's name?

What does the name Elohim teach us about God?

What are the implications of God's using the name Elohim to introduce Himself in His Word?

Where have you seen evidence of God's creative genius at work?

Respond to Dr. Evans's statement: "Elohim means you can rest and relax in the power of God. It doesn't mean you're irresponsible; it doesn't mean you don't do what God expects you to do. But it does mean you understand that the powerful God, Elohim, is big enough for whatever is taking place in your life."

Application. Set aside a large block of time this week in which you do nothing but rest. Use this time as an opportunity to intentionally affirm that Elohim is in charge and has things under control.

This week's Scripture memory.

*O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!*

PSALM 8:1

Assignment. Read week 1 and complete the activities before the next group experience. Consider going deeper into this content by reading chapters 1-2 in Dr. Evans's book *The Power of God's Names* (Harvest House, 2014).

Week 1

THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S NAMES

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

I'm sure you'll agree with me that names are important. Names are useful because they allow us to label and remember the different people, places, and things we encounter each day. Names are also significant because they give us starting points for understanding and interacting with the world around us.

For example, if I mention the city of Philadelphia, you may remember from history lessons in school that its name actually means *the city of brotherly love*. When I talk about the city of Jerusalem, Bible scholars know its name means *the city of peace*. Even something as large and diverse as a city can be connected to a simple idea through the meaning of its name.

If you've been to Philly or Jerusalem lately or even if you watch the news every once in a while, you understand that the current culture and climate of those cities don't always match up with their names. Even so, the names are still important because they reveal how far those cities have moved away from the original intentions of the people who founded them.

Names are important. Names carry weight and meaning. But I need to make it clear at the beginning of our journey together that this isn't a study about names in general. It's not even a study about God's names—not primarily.

This is a study about God. Our goal is to increase our knowledge of God and to deepen our experiences with Him. We'll use His names as an entry point to achieve that goal, but always keep in mind that God's names are significant solely because they're connected to Him.

As we get started this week, we'll see that God's names carry a weight and majesty that far exceed any other name. And we'll begin our focus on God by exploring Him as Elohim—God, our strong Creator.

DAY 1

INTRODUCING GOD'S NAMES

Do you like your name? I like mine. Over the course of my life, different people have referred to me by a number of different names—Anthony, Tony, Mr. Evans, Dr. Evans, Pastor Evans, and more—but I've generally been happy with most of them. I'm comfortable with my name because it fits me comfortably.

That's not the case with everyone. In fact, I can remember that when I was young, some classmates always hated the first day of school. That's because the first day of school usually meant new teachers, and new teachers almost always used the official names recorded in their systems. The teacher would call out something like "Edward Robinson, are you present?" Then the kid would shoot his hand up and say, "I'm here, but please call me Eddie!"

How do you feel about your name? Why?

In what ways have those feelings changed throughout different seasons of your life?

WHY STUDY GOD'S NAMES?

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

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

How would you summarize our culture's understanding of and reaction to the name of Jesus?

How does our culture understand and react to the term *Christian*?

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

That's really the heart of this study. I hope and pray as we take this journey to explore the names of God and all the wonderful things they reveal, we'll experience His presence in a real and meaningful way. Let that be your goal in the weeks to come.

WHY SO MANY NAMES?

God has many names. We've already mentioned two common ways we refer to Him in our culture today—Jesus and Christ—but that's just scratching the surface. In fact, there's no way we could do justice in this study to even half of God's names recorded in the Bible.

For that reason I'll focus our study on some of the primary names God used to reveal Himself in Scripture—names like Elohim, Jehovah, Adonai, El Shaddai, Immanuel, and more. These will serve as a helpful introduction to God's majestic, multidimensional name.

What are the major names and titles you use to address God or speak about Him?

How do you decide which name to use in different situations?

Maybe you're curious about the large number of God's names represented in Scripture. Maybe you're wondering, *Why does God have so many names in the first place? Why can't we know Him simply as God?*

One reason God gave us so many names to refer to Him is so that we can gain a better perspective on who He is. In other words, the reason we need so many names is that one name by itself doesn't fully describe God's majesty and power. One name alone can't fully communicate all of who He is.

You can see this principle at work in the way our culture responds to superstar athletes. When an individual rises above the rest and becomes truly great, we typically respond by giving him a nickname. That's how a defensive tackle in the NFL named Charles Edward Greene became Mean Joe Greene. He was too good for just one name. That's how Wayne Gretzky became The Great One in the National Hockey League. And that's why you rarely hear about a basketball player named Julius Erving; you hear about Dr. J instead.

We use multiple names to highlight the unique attributes of people we consider great. It's appropriate, then, that God uses multiple names to communicate His many attributes and the majesty of His greatness to us.

What attributes of God are most meaningful to you? Why?

In over four decades of ministry and six decades of life, I've become increasingly convinced that God desires for us to know Him for all He truly is. As we understand and experience the many aspects of His goodness and power, our hearts are opened to worshiping Him.

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

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

Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

EXODUS 3:13-14

What does the name I AM teach us about God and His attributes?

Moses knew he couldn't take command of the Israelites and lead them out of Egypt based on his own name and his own authority. That's why he needed to know God's name. Moses needed to connect himself to a specific attribute of God in order to display the power attached to God's name.

God responded to Moses by revealing one of my favorite names in Scripture: "I AM WHO I AM" (v. 14). We'll go deeper into the meaning and power of this name later in the study. For now simply understand that God told Moses all he needed to know about Himself for Moses to respond in obedience, and He did it by revealing His name.

Be prepared for a similar experience this week as we begin this journey toward a more meaningful experience with God and a deeper understanding of the power of His names.

DAY 2

THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S NAME

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

You may have noticed that some parents name their children after celebrities or other influential people. For example, in recent decades many parents have named their sons Michael Jordan in hopes of forging a connection between their child and Jordan's athletic ability. Others have named their kids after Beyoncé or other famous people in an attempt to emulate their favorite celebrity. I've even had people from Africa send me photos of their children named Tony Evans!

What are some of your favorite names? Why?

What do you know about the origins or history of your name?

Of course, being named after a person doesn't mean you actually receive any talents or abilities from that person. A person who's been named Michael Jordan can be entirely clumsy and uncoordinated. The name alone contains no special power without the character and abilities to support it. Nomenclature doesn't equate with substance.

Remember that today as we explore the majesty of God's name. His name is indeed great but only because it receives its substance from Him.

HOW MAJESTIC IS GOD'S NAME

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

*O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!*

PSALM 8:1

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

What ideas or images come to mind when you hear the word *majesty*?

My wife and I recently took a trip to Alaska with several hundred partners and ministry supporters of our radio ministry, The Urban Alternative. Alaska is one of our favorite places to visit, simply because of its relaxing nature and inspiring beauty. Yet something special happened on this trip. Our cruise guide, who had hosted well over 90 cruises in the same area, told us he'd never seen the weather so perfect. Each day the skies were clear and beautiful, giving us many opportunities to marvel at the splendor of God's creation.

In fact, things were so perfect that our guide named that trip the atheist cruise. He said, "If someone was an atheist when they got on this cruise, they couldn't be by the time it was over."

When have you been most impressed or awed by the majesty of the natural world?

This is the kind of majesty David wrote about in Psalm 8. Like my wife and me, David had been awed by the splendor of God's creation. He responded by recognizing his own smallness and insignificance in comparison to the majesty of God's name expressed through creation:

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?*

PSALM 8:3-4

For example, if the president of the United States walked into the room, you wouldn't address him in an informal way. You wouldn't say, "What's up, Dude?" The position of president demands a certain degree of recognition and respect.

Who are some of the people you respect most in the world?

Record at least three.

1.

2.

3.

In what ways does your manner of speaking with these people differ from your manner of speaking with everyone else?

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

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

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

What steps have you taken to honor and revere God's name?

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

Conclude your study today by contemplating the majesty and holiness of God. Then speak with Him about it. Use His names with reverence and awe as you praise His majesty.

DAY 3

TAKING GOD'S NAME IN VAIN

People who grew up in my generation were generally familiar with the Ten Commandments. Even people who didn't go to church could name most of them. And if you attended church in those days, as most people did, you were especially familiar with the Third Commandment:

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

EXODUS 20:7

We usually heard the commandments in the King James Version back then:

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

EXODUS 20:7, KJV

For my generation this was a rock-solid command. Saying anything that could be interpreted as taking God's name in vain would most likely get your mouth washed out with soap. It was serious business.

How would you define what it means to take God's name in vain?

Where in our culture do you see God's name being taken in vain?

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

A LACK OF SUBSTANCE

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

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

What emotions do you experience when you hear other people take God's name in vain? Why?

What situations tempt you to use God's name in vain?

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

But taking God's name in vain goes to a deeper level, one that can apply even to Christians if we're not careful. This happens when we attempt to define God or speak on His behalf in a way that's contrary to His character. Too many people in our culture attempt to define God based on their own personal desires. They try to make Him say whatever they want so that they can do whatever they want.

Why is it tempting to use God's name to support our opinions?

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

The serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'"

GENESIS 3:1

Notice the Devil didn't have any problem bringing up God's name. In fact, he knew he wouldn't get very far with Adam or Eve if he left God out of the discussion. So he invoked God's name in a way that supported his own desires and advanced his own agenda. He used God's name in vain.

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

When Satan mentioned God, however, he used only the name Elohim. He dropped the name that spoke of God's relational authority over people because he wanted to define God on his own terms.

What are some modern examples of people using God's name to advance their own purposes?

What steps can you take to avoid abusing God's name in those ways?

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

A LACK OF FEAR

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

This is a mistake. Why? Because fearing God's name is a primary catalyst for living a life that's pleasing to Him. That's what David learned:

*Teach me Your way, O LORD;
I will walk in Your truth;
Unite my heart to fear Your name.*

PSALM 86:11

Read Psalm 86:11-17. What do these verses teach about God and His name?

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

Which activities in your daily routine help you fear God and respect His name?

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

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

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

In what ways have you recently experienced God's power and provision?

As we begin our study of God's names, be prepared to discover God in ways you've never imagined and to know and experience Him more deeply through His powerful, majestic names.

DAY 4

INTRODUCING ELOHIM

You've probably heard the saying "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." It's true. First impressions leave lasting impressions. That's why we usually try to put our best foot forward when we meet people for the first time.

That's another reason names are so important. They're an integral part of any first impression.

What techniques do you typically use when trying to make a good first impression?

God doesn't need to make good first impressions, of course. He's God! He always acts consistently with His character, and any person who has a genuine encounter with Him always comes away impressed.

Still, it's interesting to note that the first verse of the Bible basically serves as God's introduction to humanity:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

GENESIS 1:1

What are your impressions of God, based on this verse?

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

In essence God said, "Hello. I'm Elohim." Let's explore the implications of that choice for those of us who follow God today.

ELOHIM IS TRANSCENDENT

Why did God choose for us to get to know Him first and foremost as Elohim, the Creator God? One primary reason could be that He wanted us to recognize the transcendent quality of His nature and character.

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

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

Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

ROMANS 1:20

Why is it important for us to understand God's transcendent nature?

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

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

Read the following passages of Scripture and record how they contribute to your understanding of God's eternal nature.

Isaiah 44:6-8

Revelation 1:8

Not only does Elohim transcend creation and time, but He also transcends space. Everything you and I know and experience is contained within the heavens and the earth. Even with a tool as powerful as the Hubble telescope, we can perceive only what exists in our physical universe. We can't comprehend anything beyond the heavens and the earth because that's the space in which we exist; it's where we've been placed.

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

ELOHIM IS IMMANENT

Look at this description of God from the Book of Jeremiah:

"Am I a God who is near," declares the LORD,

"And not a God far off?

Can a man hide himself in hiding places

So I do not see him?" declares the LORD.

"Do I not fill the heavens and the

earth?" declares the LORD.

JEREMIAH 23:23-24

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

At the same time, we shouldn't think of our Creator God as an energy source like the force in *Star Wars*. Elohim isn't a "May the force be with you" Being. In fact, as we continue reading Genesis 1, we discover very different attributes of God connected with His name Elohim:

*[Elohim] said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."
[Elohim] made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. [Elohim] called the expanse heaven.
And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.*

GENESIS 1:6-8

What do these verses communicate about God's nature?

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

Why is it important for us to recognize the fact that God wants to be intimately engaged with His creation?

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

The best news of all is that Elohim, the strong Creator, involves Himself in the lives of human beings as the crown of His creation. That includes you.

As you pray throughout the day, make a conscious effort to speak with God not as a creative force but as a Person who wants to be involved in your life. Talk with Him about your thoughts, fears, and desires. Thank Him for wanting to be engaged in your life.

DAY 5

ELOHIM: THE STRONG CREATOR

We're exploring the power of God's names, so I think it's appropriate that we've started with Elohim, the strong Creator God.

Yesterday we noted that God used the name Elohim to introduce Himself to humanity in Genesis 1. We also explored reasons God chose to use that name as a first impression: because the name Elohim points both to God's transcendence over all creation and to His personal interaction with creation.

In short, the name Elohim affirms right at the beginning of Scripture that God chooses to balance His extreme power and His intimate concern in relating to you and me.

How have you experienced God's power in your life?

How have you experienced God's personal care in your specific circumstances?

Today we'll conclude our study of the name Elohim by considering practical implications for our lives as we experience God's power and personal involvement.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S POWER

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

How do you see God's power at work in the world today?

In addition, the way Elohim is used in the opening chapters of Genesis points directly to God as Creator. We began exploring that connection yesterday, but here's an additional truth I don't want you to miss: the Hebrew term translated *created* is used only in connection with God throughout the Bible. Human beings are never the subject of a sentence in which *created* is the verb.

The reason is that people are not creators. People can reconfigure, recalibrate, redesign, or reform things that have been created, but no human beings can create something totally on their own. We lack the power, ingenuity, and ability to create anything *ex nihilo*—out of nothing—as God does.

God's creative power is reinforced throughout the Bible, including this passage from the Book of Hebrews:

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

HEBREWS 11:3

How does this verse reflect God's power as Creator?

Why is faith necessary to connect with God as Creator?

So what does God's identity as strong Creator God mean for you? How can you connect with Elohim's power as you live, work, and seek to serve Him each day?

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

What circumstances in your life feel beyond your control?

How do you typically respond when life gets difficult? What actions do you take?

Too often we get hung up on trying to see a solution when circumstances are difficult and life gets hard. That's human nature. Even as Christians, we try to create solutions to our problems instead of turning to God. Even when we call on Him, we often suggest creative ways for Him to straighten out our situation, tweak our trial, or fix our failure.

What we need to do is remember God's name, because Elohim is more than able to create something out of nothing in our lives. He's done it before, and He can do it for you and me if we call on His name and then get out of the way.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S INVOLVEMENT

So far we've considered the name Elohim in connection with Genesis 1:1. Yet something very interesting and relevant for our everyday lives happened in verse 2:

The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

GENESIS 1:2

The Hebrew term translated *formless and void* is *tohu wa-bohu*. It refers to a physical location that's uninhabitable, almost to the point of being a wasteland. But that wasn't the end of the story. Elohim was present in the midst of that wasteland, and He cared enough to hover over the chaos and create life.

If we fast-forward to Genesis 3, we see another mess that was created, this time due to the impact of sin:

The LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

GENESIS 3:9-13

What's your initial reaction to these verses? Why?

Talk about a mess. God had created a paradise for Adam and Eve, one that was supposed to extend to all humanity throughout history. But this paradise was ruined by the corruption of sin. It became another wasteland.

How have you seen the impact of sin in the world today?

Yet all hope wasn't lost, because Elohim was there. Elohim, who had hovered over *tohu wa-bohu* and created life, also had the power to redeem His creation from the corruption of sin. Just as important, Elohim cared enough about His creation to step into the mess and die on a cross in order to make us clean. That's the message of the gospel.

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

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

Read Psalm 139. What are some ways God knows you intimately?

What steps can you take to remember and rely on Elohim's power and personal care for you?

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

Think about the area of your life you identified as being out of control. Have you presented it to Elohim and asked Him to create something new and beautiful from it? If not, do that now. Then spend time praising Him for His power and intimate care for you.

WITNESS THE MAJESTY & GLORY OF GOD'S NAMES

In biblical times, names communicated a person's essence—their history, nature, or character. That's why God revealed Himself by dozens of different names in Scripture. No single name could convey the fullness of His character and works.

In this six-session Bible study, pastor Tony Evans examines prominent names of God in Scripture. God's names invite you to know Him as Creator, Ruler, Provider, Warrior, and more. Dr. Evans explores the biblical meanings of the names and the related attributes of God. By understanding His names, you can experience Him more deeply.

**God is waiting to show you more of who He is.
Call on Him in the power of His names.**

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The Power of God's Names Bible Study Kit includes resources for leading a six-session group study: one Bible study book, *The Power of God's Names* paperback book, and two DVDs that feature Tony Evans teaching the study. Item 005634204

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