

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating outwards from the center, creating a bright, glowing effect behind the text.

KNOWING HIS GREAT

NAME

**God's Covenantal Character,
Our Identity, and His Community**

STUDENT EDITION

RACHEL ANN CRADDOCK



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Although many publishers do not capitalize terms, and particularly pronouns which refer to the Trinity, in this study CDM publications has capitalized those elements for clarity of reference.

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INTRODUCTION

The story of Scripture shows us the greatness of the God we are privileged to know. We find that the One, whom by grace we call Father, is also our Creator, King, Healer, Provider, Shepherd, and so much more. As the Bible expands our view of who God is, it also deepens our gratitude for the fact that such a God has chosen to make Himself known to us. Becoming secure and confident in this knowledge will radically shape how we view ourselves (identity) and transform how we relate to our family, friends, teachers, and others.

In order to deepen our knowledge of God, it is important to be known by others authentically in God's family (church). Certainly, committing to make yourself knowable in a local church requires both effort and risk. However, God's grace makes this task both possible and rewarding. As the Lord's Prayer teaches us, through Christ, God is not just *my* Father but *our* Father. Our being known by Him gives us the confidence to be known by our brothers and sisters in Christ. And in turn, opening ourselves up to be known by others deepens our knowledge and understanding of the love and character of God.

We invite you to dive into this book in community with others. This is an invitation to come alongside us into the stories where God's character is revealed. Our God is a relational God, and we have the great privilege of being known by Him as a part of God's family.

In this study we will reflect on the character of our God by examining some of the words and phrases that are used to describe God in Scripture. Some of these words and phrases are used by God to describe Himself. Others are what is commonly called an **epithet**, a word or phrase someone in Scripture uses to capture the essence of his or her experience of God. This is not unlike the way many of us are given a nickname at some point in our lives. Our friends give us a nickname which reminds them of what we've done and serves as a reminder of our character.

In many cases, our nicknames can be reminders of our less glorious moments in life—not so with God. In contrast, each of His names gives us a window into the multi-faceted beauty of the Lord.

Theologically, it is also worth pointing out that just as the receiv-



WHAT DO YOU ALREADY KNOW?

What names of God do you already know?

How do these truths about who God is impact the way you live right now?

How do these truths impact the way you pray right now?

KNOWING YOU

On a scale of 1-10, how well do you think your peers in your church know you?

Do you have adults in your local church (other than your parents) who know you? Name them here.



KNOWING YOU

What are your nicknames?

How did you get your nicknames?



KNOWING GOD

What is God's personal name?

KNOWING TRUTH

Define theology:

What is Covenant theology?

Create your own question about Covenant theology.

ing of an epithet or nickname does not legally change our name, such as the case with many of the words and phrases we'll examine in our study. As we'll see in our first unit, there is only one personal name, **Yahweh**, with which the Lord identifies Himself. However, for the sake of simplicity we have chosen to use the word "names" to describe each of the words and phrases we'll examine together.

We will begin the study by discovering God as **Yahweh**, the relational and covenant-keeping God. Covenant theology will be the starting point for all our lessons. **Theology** is simply the study of God. Covenant theology looks at the study of God through the lens of the covenants revealed in Scripture. The word **covenant** is mentioned in the Bible almost 300 times and allows readers to see the Bible as one big story: the story of a personal God rescuing His people from the reign of sin and restoring them to Himself through the **redemptive** work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Each week as we consider His character and attributes, we will always consider how knowing God as the Covenant-Keeper is foundational to knowing Him in the other attributes of His character.

(1) KNOWING THE CONTEXT:

Our study of the Scriptures will take us on a journey through the Bible with its ancient cultures, customs, and vocabulary. Each lesson will start by pointing out where we are in God's unfolding story of redemption. This will help us to discover what each name meant to the original hearers (Old Testament Israel) and will give us the correct context for learning each of the names and attributes of God.

(2) KNOWING HIS GREAT NAME: After we discover the context, we will focus on one Old Testament passage for each of God's names as it is revealed in Scripture. We will look at the passage to learn more about God's great name, His attributes, and His character. In this section, you will encounter what theologians call the old covenant. The old covenant is the working agreement God had with His chosen people Israel—that He would be their God and they would be His people. Under the old covenant, God wanted Israel to remain loyal to Him:



obeying and worshiping Him alone. When Israel obeyed, they received blessing. When they did not obey (which happened continuously throughout the Old Testament), they would be punished.

(3) KNOWING THE CHRIST CONNECTION: With each name of God in the Old Testament, we will connect you to a text from the Gospels in the New Testament to show you how God's great name and His character are displayed in the life of Christ and His ministry on earth. In this section, it is important to understand what theologians call the new covenant. The new covenant is the sacrifice of Jesus and His death on the cross which signifies sins can be forgiven once and for all. Under the new covenant, all Christ-followers have direct and intimate access to God, the forgiveness of sins, and are given the promised Holy Spirit. The new covenant also extends God's family beyond Israel to the people of every tribe, tongue, and nation.

(4) KNOWING YOURSELF (IDENTITY) AND BEING KNOWN (COMMUNITY): As we grow in our understanding of who God is through the lens of His various names, we will also unpack how these specific attributes shape the way we think about ourselves (identity) as those who belong to Him. Lastly, we will consider how our understanding of who God is shapes how we relate to others within the community of God's people, the church.

KNOWING CHRIST

What do you already know about Jesus? What was He like? What did He do?

KNOWING AND GROWING

Which section are you most excited about?

How do you want God to grow you through this material?

Write out a short prayer.

KNOWING HIS GREAT NAME:

YAHWEH

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

A.W. Tozer¹

(1) KNOWING THE CONTEXT

“What is the name of the God who sent you?” When tasked with the mission of leading the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, this is the question that Moses anticipated being asked by the Israelites (Exodus 3:13). When Moses asked God how he should respond, the Lord’s answer to that question helps us to understand something which is at once both deeply personal and central to everything else we will come to see about God in this study. The Hebrew word for God’s name is **Yahweh**, which most English Bibles translate as “LORD” or “I AM.” However, if we understand the original language in which Moses wrote (Hebrew) and the culture of the ancient Near East, we recognize that God is telling Moses—and us—much more about Himself than might be seen at first glance. This week we will be

digging in and seeing how Yahweh is the relational and covenant-keeping God.

*What is a **covenant**?* A covenant was a type of formal relationship between two parties in the ancient world. Sometimes, those two parties were nations. Other times, those two parties were people, such as in a marriage. Throughout the Bible we see

God committing Himself to a covenant relationship with His people to redeem them from the curse of sin and to bring them into a relationship with Himself. Like in a marriage covenant, God makes vows



MAIN IDEA

Yahweh is God’s relational and covenant-keeping name.

WHAT DO YOU ALREADY KNOW?

What do you remember from last week?

What is God’s personal name?

What do you remember about Covenant theology?

¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1978), 1.



KNOWING YOU

What is your experience of worldly marriage covenants?



KNOWING GOD

How is Yahweh's covenant relationship with His people different than your earthly experience of marriage covenants?

Reflect on the significance of Yahweh being God's great name forever. Why is it important to see that His name is meant to be known throughout all generations?

to His people, and He is faithful to keep them. Unlike in a marriage, God's promises transcend any one individual or even generation. Instead, God's covenant faithfulness extends from one generation to another. His rescue of Moses and the Israelites was not simply a response to their cries for help, but a fulfillment of His promises to past generations of His people, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:23-25).

However, Yahweh's covenant relationship with His people is not just formal and contractual; it is also deeply personal. God knows each of His people by name and invites them to know Him in the same way. In our passage, God revealed Himself to Moses using the personal and covenant name, *Yahweh*. The Jews avoided ever speaking the name *Yahweh* out of a fear of doing so irreverently, and therefore, would substitute it with the formal Hebrew word *Adonai* (Lord) instead. However, God's act of giving us His name is a gracious invitation to know Him personally, to call Him by name.

(2) KNOWING YAHWEH

Read Exodus 3:13-15 (below). Highlight God's great name. Underline the historical significance of His great name. Circle the places that connect God's great name to identity and community.

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."² And He said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

² Yahweh

Read Exodus 6:2-8. Highlight God's great name. Underline the "I will" statements. Put a circle around the word covenant every time you see it.

God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name the LORD I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered My covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"

(3) KNOWING THE CHRIST CONNECTION

As we turn to the New Testament, we see God's character as the relational and covenant-keeping God fully on display in the person of Jesus.

John 8:58 (NIV) — "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

2 Corinthians 1:10 — He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will deliver us again.

KNOWING TRUTH

What do these "I will" statements mean to you in the present day?

Why is it significant that the name Yahweh is connected to actions?

KNOWING CHRIST

Using the New Testament passages, identify the connections you see between what Jesus has done for you and Yahweh's covenant promises from Exodus.



KNOWING YOUR WORLD

Thinking about your community, what are the “ceremonial laws and regulations” in the culture surrounding you in the present day?

Sometimes at school, church, work, or home you may experience social pressures or unspoken community rules. What would it look like to experience freedom from these “ceremonial laws and regulations”?

KNOWING YOUR HEART

In Exodus 6, Yahweh said He will adopt His covenant people. God redeems our hearts and brings us into a family—we are saved to be a people. Use the space below to write honestly about your personal experience of relationships in your local church.



Galatians 3:13-14 — *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*

Galatians 5:1 — *For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

Ephesians 1:3, 5 — *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, . . . He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.*

In Galatians 5:1 (above), Paul was describing the way Christ’s death frees us from Jewish ceremonial laws and regulations. These were major points of conflict in the church community as Jews and Gentiles learned to find their identity in the work of Jesus alone instead of in Jesus plus circumcision, or plus what they ate or did not eat, or plus with whom they socialized.

(4) BEING KNOWN: YAHWEH, IDENTITY, AND COMMUNITY

Being known by Yahweh can powerfully shape the way you view yourself (identity) and the way you approach relationships in your local church (community). Knowing His great name as **Yahweh** is to know He is redeeming us daily from the things that keep us in slavery to the sinful nature in the present day. Yahweh delivered His covenant family out of Egypt through Moses, and through Jesus, God delivers His people from our present-day sin—this frees us, but we must stand firm in this truth.

In Exodus 6, when God revealed His personal name **Yahweh** to Moses, God also made the promise: “I will be your God and you will be My people.” This is a promise of adoption into Yahweh’s covenant family. **Yahweh** is a great name, and knowing and being known by Yahweh is the beginning of true community. *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* is a series of questions and answers that were developed to teach about the Christian faith. Question 34 explains adoption into Yahweh’s covenant family this way: “Adoption is an act of God’s free grace, whereby we are received into the number—and have a right to all the privileges—of the sons of God.”³

³ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism with Scripture Proofs* (Lawrenceville, GA: Committee on Discipleship Ministries, 2010), 27.

To know Yahweh makes us children of God, members of His family, and fellow heirs with Christ. This aspect of His character should push us into community in the church. Family life can be challenging at times, but Yahweh is the God of the Church,⁴ and the people in His Church are the fulfillment of the promise—“*I will be your God, and you will be My people.*” If we know Yahweh and are confident in being known by Yahweh, we will be deeply connected to the people in His Church. If what comes to our minds when we think about God is first and foremost **Yahweh**, His covenant and relational name, this will change the way we live and relate to His redeemed people in our daily lives.

Read Romans 8:12-17. Circle the words that refer to Christian identity. Underline words that remind you of covenant community.

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.



KNOWING AND GROWING

Name one to three ways your local church provides opportunities for covenant relationships to develop over time. Circle one opportunity you’d like to pursue more as you think about how knowing and being known by Yahweh, the relational and covenant-keeping God, transforms the way you think about community and relationships in your local context.

Write out a prayer based on what you learned about knowing and being known by Yahweh, the relational and covenant-keeping God.

⁴ Throughout this study, when Church is capitalized, I am referring to the universal Church consisting of every believer since Christ’s ascension until His return. When you find the word church in all lowercase letters, I am referring to a local body of believers.