



SECRET CHURCH WHO IS GOD?

Good evening.

God is our refuge and strength, ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall to the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose stream makes glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts His voice, the earth melts. Lord almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes war cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow, shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.' The Lord almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress (Ps. 46).

Do you know this God? I mean really, do you know this God? Jeremiah 9:23-24, "*This is what the Lord says: 'Let not the wise man boast of His wisdom or the strong man boast of His strength or the rich man boast of His riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight'* declares the Lord." Do not boast about how smart you are. Do not boast about how intellectual you are. Do not boast about how rich you are. You have one boast in this life, and it is that you know God.

We're focusing tonight on our persecuted brothers and sisters in three countries, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. India, a land of a million gods, literally hundreds of millions of gods who are worshiped. I can't get out of my mind images from Central India walking past Hindu temples and seeing people bowing down before idols, throwing money before idols, weeping before idols, dancing before idols—false gods. They have such a warped perception of God. But ladies and gentlemen, so do we. We have a warped perception of God.

I'll draw your attention to one article on the cover of one section in the Wall Street Journal entitled *Redefining God*, and listen to the thesis of the article. "Across the country the faithful are redefining God, dissatisfied with conventional images of an authoritarian or paternalistic deity. People are embracing quirky, individualistic conceptions of God to suit their own spiritual needs." You say, "Yes. That is what the culture is doing." No, it's what the Church is doing. We have this dangerous tendency today to create God, redefine God, to be who we want Him to be. And really we create a god who looks a lot like us. He's a nice, middle-class American God. He looks like us, and he thinks like us, and he's comfortable with our lifestyles. He's comfortable with our self-saturated lukewarm faith. He's comfortable with our apathy. He's comfortable with half-hearted devotion to him. He's comfortable with materialistic indulgences. He's comfortable with all those things, because we are. We fashion a god who looks a lot like us.

Don't miss the danger here. If this is the case, then when we gather together in this room every Sunday, or the church that you are a part of gathers together for worship, and you sing songs, lift your hands out to god, this god that you've created, the reality is you're not worshipping God. You're worshipping yourselves. And even when we are known as a people who worship in the Church, the reality is that the object of our worship has been grossly mis-defined.

So I want you to know from the very beginning of our time together tonight that our goal is not to redefine God. He is not open to redefinition and He will not be trifled with. Our goal is not redefinition. Our goal is revelation. We want to see how God has revealed Himself to us in all of His beauty, and all of His grandeur, and all of His terror, and all of His might. We want to see who the God of the Bible is.

So if you have a Bible and I hope you do, then let's get to know the One who wrote it. So I want to invite you to pull it out and you've got verses that are inter-dispersed all throughout the booklets you have, and there are some times where I want us to turn to some different places so you might mark some things. So kind of have them both there. You've got there in your notes. Hopefully you have sat next to someone tonight who you can cheat off of along the way as you miss different blanks at different times. You will need each other. This is all about community in this room.

What you see after Jeremiah 9 in your Secret Church study guide, are some quotes there from a guy named A.W. Tozer. A little background here, because you will see quotes from Tozer sprinkled throughout our time together tonight. He wrote a little book called *Knowledge Of The Holy*—which by the way, in the very back of your study guide, there's a list of recommended reading of some books if you want to go deeper into some of these things. *Knowledge Of The Holy* is back there. It's a thin book, one of the classics on the attributes of God, and probably the book, when it comes to the doctrine of God, and understanding who God is, that has had more impact on my life than any other book. Tozer just says things in very powerful ways. So you're going to see different things that he said, and I kind of want to set the stage before we dive in tonight with some of the things that Tozer challenged me with. I went back and re-read it.

Tozer says, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you. He goes on, "Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question 'What comes into your mind when you think about God?' we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man. Were we able to know exactly what our most influential religious leaders think of God today, we may be able, with some precision, to foretell where the Church will stand tomorrow." I want you to think about that. Your understanding of God affecting what your life is going to look like. And especially among church leaders all across this room. Our understanding of God today will affect what the Church looks like tomorrow. He goes on,

It's not a cheerful thought that millions of us who live in a land of Bibles, who belong to churches and labor to promote the Christian religion, may yet pass our whole life on this earth without once having thought or tried to think seriously about the being of God. Few of us have let our hearts gaze and wonder at the I AM, the self-existent self back of which no creature can think. Such thoughts are too painful for us. We prefer to think where it will do more good—about how to build a better mousetrap, for instance, or how to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. For this we are now paying

a too heavy price in the secularization of our religion and the decay of our inner lives.

Tozer addresses the things, the trifling things, that we fill our minds with and our conversations with, when we neglect contemplating and looking at the being, and the essence of who God is.

Last quote I want to put before you at the start here. It's when Tozer says, "The heaviest obligation lying before the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him—and of her." I think there are few things more important we can do together on a Saturday evening than contemplate the being of God and who He is. The challenge is how in the world do we fit this in between now and midnight. And some of you may have talked with people from last night know that it may not happen. But we're going to do our best though. This is round two. You get like a dress rehearsal. You guys get the... Anyway,

Why Are We Here?

To Know God's Glory

Three primary reasons why we're here. I want to make sure we are on the same page from the very beginning. We are here, number one, to know God's glory. We are gathered because we want to see God in all of His greatness. We want to contemplate His character.

I can remember sitting in theology class at seminary, and when we got to the doctrine of God, I can remember sitting there with my laptop in front of me and I'm taking notes as the professor is taking us through attributes of God. There are moments where you are sitting there listening, and thinking about the attributes of God, the being of God, and it almost didn't feel appropriate to be sitting there typing this on a laptop. I felt like I needed to at least be typing on my knees if I was going to type at all. And so I hope that we will sense that in this room tonight. I hope that we will sense the magnitude of what we are dealing with and talking about is the glory of God, and you will feel the freedom. If you have room, then I hope you will feel free to fill in blanks on your knees, or at least in your hearts. My prayer is that six hours from now we will have a deeper knowledge of the glory of God, than we do at this moment. We want to know God's glory.

To Learn God's Word

Second, we want to learn God's Word. This is the foundation for our knowledge of God. The only way you know the glory of God is through the Word of God. That's why you have all the Scripture just saturated throughout this booklet. We're going to fly through some of these scriptures. We won't read every Scripture that's listed in these booklets. I would encourage some of you to go back, and do what many people have done, either with small groups or individually, and take what we cram into six hours of teaching, and unpack it in the days, weeks, and months ahead—there's probably years of stuff in here to unpack. We want to know God's glory. We want to learn God's Word.

To Advance God's Kingdom

Third, we want to advance God's Kingdom. And this is what I want to remind you, that this evening is not about you. Something very important for you to understand about Secret Church. We have not gathered here in this room for your sake. The goal tonight, the purpose of our time tonight is not to teach you who God is. It's not for you to see who God

is. The goal is for you to be enabled to teach others who God is. And there is a significant difference between the two.

If the first was our goal then everything we do would center around what happens in this room tonight. It would center around you. And we would need to worry about the entertainment value of the next six hours we have together. For the reality is you could have found a lot better things to do on a Saturday night if your goal was to be entertained. You probably could have found a lot more Christian events you could have gone to if your goal was to be entertained. The goal was not to entertain you. The goal is to equip you, and to equip you with two main things.

Number one, to equip you with the knowledge of who God is, so that you can teach others who God is. God raise up a Church that doesn't just receive your word, but reproduces your word. I want to encourage you to listen. I know there's tons of notes that are sitting in front of you in this booklet but write down everything that comes to mind—everything. Imagine that you are teaching this to someone tomorrow. So be thinking about what you need to know in order to pass it on. How are you going to listen tonight to reproduce, not just receive?

That's one thing—to be equipped with the knowledge, the ability to teach this—but then second, to equip you with the passion to lay down your lives to teach the nations who God is, and to show the nations who God is with your lives. The goal is to advance kingdom, so take good notes.

There are cameras that are set up with the goal in mind that everything that we cover tonight will then be translated into different languages, so that what we're doing here tonight will eventually be in the hands and the ears of church leaders around the world in multiple languages. So we're not gathered tonight for our sake. We're gathered for the sake of the glory of God in all nations.

So I want to encourage you to stay awake. For the sake of the nations, stay awake tonight. If you need to get up and walk around at some point, do it for the sake of the nations. I say that jokingly, but there is even a grain of truth to that. I remember when I was in Central India, and I remember this city that we were in with seven million people. One day we went up to the highest point in the city, which was a Hindu temple. We walked past all of these people that were bowing down in front of these idols—false gods—just surrounded by them in this temple. We get to the edge of that temple—it's really kind of the edge of a mountain—and you look out over this cliff and you can literally—if you can just imagine with me—you can see a city full of seven million people. And I want you to imagine looking out, seeing a city filled with seven million people, and knowing that most of those people have little or no knowledge of the gospel.

As we looked down and prayed over that city, there were two words God kept bringing to my mind, and to my heart. God kept saying, "David, wake up. Wake up." You're going to hear later tonight from Ramesh. He lives in Northern India, where there are 600 million people. Do you know how many Christians there are among those 600 million? A quarter of 1% evangelical Christian. 600 million people. We gather together tonight to advance the kingdom of God in Northern India, to be equipped to take the gospel and the good news of who God is to Northern India. And if we disconnect what we do tonight from what God is doing among un-reached peoples and among the persecuted brothers and sisters around the world, then we have missed the point! We are here to advance God's kingdom, with a capital "K."

Can We Know God?

The Reality

Can we know God? The reality is, God is incomprehensible. Psalm 145:3 says, "*His greatness no one can fathom.*" God is incomprehensible. We just sang about that. We can never fully understand any single thing about God. We can know something about God's love, power, wisdom and the other attributes that we're going to talk about tonight. But we can never know His love, power, wisdom or other attributes exhaustively. This is key for us to understand. We can know something about Him, but we can't know Him exhaustively.

Now some of you are thinking, "What about 1 Corinthians 13:12?" It says, "*Now I know in part; then I shall know fully.*" Well what Paul is saying is there's coming a day where our knowledge is going to be more complete, but he's not saying there's going to be a day when we are going to be omniscient. Paul doesn't say in 1 Corinthians 13:12 that one day we'll know all things. We have this idea sometimes. We think, and we even say, when we get to heaven we'll know everything. I hate to break it to you but when you go to heaven you're not going to be God. It's not going to happen. It's not the purpose. You're not going to know all things. His omniscience is an attribute unique to Him alone. So we can't know God exhaustively.

The Reason

The reason is twofold. Number one, our sinfulness, and number two, His greatness. We can't know God fully because of both our sinfulness and His greatness. We'll unpack both of those. Because of our sin we are hindered from glimpsing the fullness of God. We know that. Every single one of us has sin in our lives that keeps us from knowing God as completely as we could. But even when all sin will be removed from us, we will still be finite and God will still be infinite. Even when we get to heaven we won't be infinite like God. We won't be God. That means that for all of eternity we will increase in our knowledge of Him.

I want you to think about this with me. God is infinite in His love and His power and His wisdom, which is something we're going to talk about later on. But if that's true, and we are always going to be finite, not infinite, then the reality is we will be learning more, and more, and more about His love, and His power, and His wisdom and, all that He is for all of eternity.

We can respond to this in two ways. If in pride we want to be equal to God in knowledge, this will depress us. Some people think, "I'm never going to get there? Never going to understand it all? I mean you think after a cool 400 billion years I might be closer." But the reality is, no, we will not be any closer.

However, if in humility we want to live to adore and worship God, this will delight us. I want you to let this picture soak in, that for all of eternity, day after day after day, we will never tire of learning more and more and more and more about the love, the grace, the mercy, and the power of God. And this is huge. Sometimes when people think about heaven, they say, "If heaven is going to be perfect won't it be perfectly boring?" And some of you have thought that. We think, "That's a long time—eternity. I mean, don't you get tired of that?" The reality is because of who we are going to see in God tonight, we're going to realize that you cannot get enough of this God and for all of eternity we will learn more and more and more. We can know God.

The Resolution

Though we cannot understand God fully, we can understand God truly. Some might think if you can't understand God fully, then what's the point? Why even try? Well the reality is that we can't understand Him fully, but we can understand Him truly. Everything Scripture tells us about God is true. So based on Scripture, even though we don't have exhaustive knowledge of God, we do have true knowledge of God.

So everything we talk about tonight, we're talking about that which He has revealed to us, and we can know that it is true, though not exhaustive. Though God is incomprehensible, He is knowable.

How We Know God

1 Corinthians 2:10-16

Only the Spirit of God Knows the Fullness of the Glory of God

How can we know God? This is where I want to invite you to turn to 1 Corinthians 2. This is a passage that we were in for some time at Brook Hills earlier this year, and it's really had a large affect on my own personal walk with God over the last few months. I want you to think about how we can know God. Look with me at 1 Corinthians 2:10. I want us to start in verse 9 to give more context. Listen to what Paul says, *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."*

He's quoting there from the Old Testament. Where is he quoting from? Isaiah 64:4. I want you to see the contrast, because in 1 Corinthians 2:10 he says the word "But." That word signals to us that we've got a contrast. Paul pretty much says that in the Old Testament, no mind has seen, no ear has heard, no eye has seen, no mind has conceived of what God has prepared." No one can even imagine it. Then he says in contrast, *"But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit"* (1 Cor. 2:10). So it's not hidden. It's revealed to us.

"The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God, for who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him. In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11). Now I want you to follow with me here. I want you to look at a truth, and some conclusions from this truth. What this passage is teaching us is that only the Spirit of God knows the fullness of the glory of God.

If We Want to Know God, then We Need the Spirit to Reveal Him to Us

Who knows the mind of a man, or the thoughts of a man, but the spirit of a man? The only one who knows the thoughts of God, the glory of God, is the Spirit of God. That means if we want to know God, then we need the Spirit to reveal Him to us. That only makes sense. If only the Spirit of God knows the fullness of the glory of God, then if we want to know God we've got to have the Spirit to reveal Him to us.

A People Who are Desperate to Know God will be Desperate for His Spirit

The reality is if that's the case, then people who are desperate to know God will be desperate for who? For His Spirit. It only makes sense. If we want to know God, and the Spirit of God is the only one who knows the fullness of the Glory of God, then we will be desperate for the Spirit of God.

This is where when I was studying this particular text a few months ago I was so convicted. Because I looked at my life as a pastor, and I looked at the church I was leading, and I didn't see a pastor, or a people desperate for the Spirit. It was convicting, because if we're

not desperate for His Spirit, it is a sure indicator that we have grown content with knowing little about God. And so I want to ask you tonight, are you desperate for the Spirit of God? When people look at your life will they say, "That's a man, that's a woman, that is desperate for the Spirit?" If not, then it's a sure indicator that we have grown content with knowing little about God.

Do We Want to Know the Glory of God?

So I ask us, do we want to know the glory of God? Then let us be a people desperate for the Spirit of God. And when we're desperate for the Spirit, our hearts will begin to understand God with the very perspective of Christ. I'll show it to you in 1 Corinthians 2. Paul quotes again there from Isaiah 40, he says, *"Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?"* (1 Cor. 2:16). Who has known the mind of God? This is a rhetorical question that indicates to us that nobody has. But then he says—here's another contrast statement—*"But we have the mind of Christ"* (1 Cor. 2:16).

This is the beauty of John 16:12-15 when Jesus says *"All that the Father has he has given to me, and all that I have I make known to you through the Spirit."* Jesus says previously, *"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know His master's business. Instead, I have called you friends"* (John 15:15). The picture is that all the Father has made known to Jesus, Jesus has made known to us through His Spirit in His Word. That should make us a people that are desperate for the Spirit of God. Do we want the glory of God? Tozer said "We have but to want Him badly enough, and He will come and manifest Himself to us."

When We Know God

Routine Religion is No Longer Tolerable

When we know God here's what we can expect. Number one, routine religion is no longer tolerable when you truly know this God. I'll give you an illustration. A guy named Charles Misner, scientific specialist in general relative theory commented on Albert Einstein's life. And I want you to listen to what he said as a commentary on Albert Einstein as it relates to religion. Albert Einstein, obviously a genius—listen to what Misner said,

The design of the universe is very magnificent and shouldn't be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had little use for organized religions, although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. He must have looked at what the Church said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they had ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt that religions he had run across did not have proper respect for the author of the universe.

You think about what a scientist knows. A scientist knows that our solar system is 100,000 light years in diameter. It contains 100 billion stars. This is just one galaxy among innumerable galaxies that are within the range of our best telescopes. In our galaxy alone, with 100 billion stars, the sun is a modest star burning at a minor 600 degrees centigrade, traveling 150 miles a second. It will take 200 million years for it to complete a revolution around our galaxy. That's one star among 100 billion. Scientists know this.

And Isaiah 40:25-26 says, *"Look at the heavens. Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name."* We just sang about the God that we worship calling 100 billion stars in our galaxy alone by name. Bob. Mary. Z134957. Our God calls the stars by name. How can you have routine religion when this is the God who we follow? This is the God who we revere. This is the God we pray to, the God we worship. Einstein, looked at the Church, and he said, "They don't know the real thing." Look at the church of which you're a part of, whether it's this church, or any other church. Do you know the real thing?

I remind you of a lot of our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world. They are not in prison now, they are not giving their lives now, because of their religion. They are giving their lives, not because they love religion. They're giving their lives because they love and know God. Routine religion is no longer tolerable when you know God. Apathy is nowhere to be found among people who know this God.

Casual Worship is No Longer Possible

Second, casual worship is no longer possible. You can't worship this God without affection. You can't worship this God without deep emotion. Now don't miss this. I'm not saying that our emotions are the gauge of our spirituality, nor am I talking about some form of emotionalism. That's not what I'm saying. What I am saying is this—If you know God truly, you will love God deeply. How can you know this God, and not feel for this God? How can you know this God, but when you worship, look like you are bored to tears? It doesn't make sense. Casual worship is no longer possible when you know this God.

Total Surrender is No Longer Optional

Third, total surrender is no longer optional. When you look at the God of the Bible, then the thought of not submitting to Him as Lord is blasphemous! When you look at the God of the Bible you will see the one who has all authority over everything in all the universe—including our lives. And we will realize that every single one of us has sacrificed the right to determine the direction of our lives when you call this God Lord. Total surrender is not an option.

Global Mission is No Longer Negotiable

Finally, when you know this God, global mission is no longer negotiable. If what this Word says about God is true, then 3,000 animistic tribes in Africa need to know about this God. If what this Book says about God is true, then 350 million Buddhists in Japan, Laos, and Vietnam need to know about this God. If what this Book says about God is true, then 950 million Hindus in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Maldives need to know about this God. If what this Book says about God is true, then over a billion people in China, North Korea, and other communist nations that don't believe in God need to know about this God. And if what this Book says about God is true, then over 1.3 billion Muslims need to know about this God. If what this Book says about God is true, and we see that, then global mission will not be negotiable in our life. You cannot know this God, and not run to the nations proclaiming that He is God. It makes no sense whatsoever.

So be warned. When you get to know this God, it will make no sense for you not to abandon everything in your life to make this God known among the nations. It will make no sense whatsoever. So if you're not wanting to go to that level, then you might not want to stick around for the next six hours.

Let's Get to Know God

A Humbling Journey

This is a humbling journey. Psalm 25 says that, *"He guides the humble."* Isaiah 66:2 says, *"This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit."* I want to remind you from the very beginning, we are not investigators doing an examination of God tonight. We are servants bowing at the feet of God tonight. There's a big difference.

A Personal Journey

Second, it's a personal journey. Now I want to remind you of this for two reasons. One, I want to remind you that our goal tonight is not to learn knowledge about God. Follow me. Our goal tonight is not to learn knowledge about God. Our goal is to know God. There's a difference. If all I want to do is learn knowledge about God, then we're seeking knowledge for knowledge's sake. The takeaway, then, of our time together tonight will be us walking away with more knowledge about God. Then we will actually grow conceited in our knowledge about God, because we'll know more than other Christians who know less than we do. We'll miss the point.

Instead this is a personal journey. We want to know God Himself, like the sheep know their shepherd, John 10. The second reason I share that with you is because the reality is that there are two types of people in the world. There are some who know this God through faith in Christ. That is to say, they have trusted in this God to save them from their sins through the gospel. They've been reconciled to this God. Others have not come to that point yet where they know this God by faith in Christ. He's the only one who can reconcile them to this God.

I mention that because I'm praying for both of these groups. I'm praying for those of us who do know this God through faith. I'm praying that God will deepen our intimacy with Him through our study together. I'm also praying for those of us who are in this group, that the end goal is not for us to walk away knowing more about what the Bible says about God.

I pray for the second group, that you walk away for the first time, not knowing facts about God, but knowing God and all of His beauty and His glory. So I'll remind you, this is a personal journey.

An Intellectual Journey

We're going to go through a lot of facts, a lot of truths, and to be honest, a lot of heady stuff. It's a mouthful, but it's also a mindful. It's heavy. And I want you to realize that some of the truths we're going to talk about, issues we're going to talk about, are actually even debated over among evangelical, Bible believing Christian scholars. There are differences of opinion on different things, not about things at the core of what Christianity is, but there are definitely different opinions. And I need you to know from the very beginning of our time together tonight that I have holes in my theology. You need to know this. There are some areas of my theology that are wrong. The only problem is...I don't know which ones they are. So you just need to realize that tonight, okay? I want to be upfront and honest with you. We all have, including myself, finite minds. And we're contemplating an infinite God. And I believe the Bible contains some very core, non-negotiable things. At the same time there are some things that are certainly open to discussion among Bible-believing, followers of Christ. Just kind of keep that in mind.

An Emotional Journey

We've talked about this. When the Bible talks about knowing God, especially in the Old Testament, you see it's not just a head-knowledge. It's talking about an intimacy. All throughout the Old Testament you see the Bible talking about how husbands *know* their wives. And that's not just knowing their name if you get my drift. There's something a little deeper there with husbands and wives. Then you get to Amos and Hosea, and you see God speaking about how He *knows* His people and it's translated in some rich ways—I've chosen you; I've cared for you. This is a very emotional picture of *knowing* God.

A Practical Journey

Next, what we need to realize is knowledge of God produces obedience. And obedience to God produces knowledge. They go together. You see 1 Peter 1, John 7, John 8:31-36. This is like a circular relationship between knowledge and obedience. The more you know God the more you obey God. The more you obey God the more you know God. They go together.

It makes no sense for us to talk about knowing God for six hours tonight, and then tomorrow disobey God with our lives. We have disconnected the whole picture. Obedience and knowledge go together. You say that sounds kind of work based. No, it's all grace based. We know God by His grace. We obey God by His grace. It's all undergirded by grace. But if you want to know God, then obey God. And if you want to obey God, then you must know God. They go together. So it's very, very practical.

A Thrilling Journey

Next, this is what we were created for. This is life. Ladies and gentlemen, you don't have to know a lot of things to make a big impact in this world. You don't have to be the smartest person. You don't have to be the most intellectual person. You don't have to be the most athletic person. You don't have to be the richest person to make a big impact in this world. I'm convinced in order to have a big impact in this world you need to know one thing. Be willing to live for that one thing and die for that one thing if necessary. Paul says it well in Philippians 3:10, "*I want to know Christ.*" This is my life. It's what I live for. It's a thrilling journey. What higher, more exalted, more compelling goal is there in this life that we could live for than to know this God? Everything fails in comparison.

A Deep Journey

Here's where we're going to go. We're going to look at the names of God, the attributes of God—we're going to split those up into His greatness and His goodness—and then we're going to close out the evening with the mysteries of God.

The three mysteries we're going to look at are the Trinity, the sovereign will of God, and God and evil. So we are going to attack like the biggest problem in Christian theology.

The Names of God

God starts the Ten Commandments talking about His name. You have Exodus 20:4 mentioned in the study guide. Exodus 20:1-2, He starts saying, "*I am the Lord your God.*" Then He says, "*You shall have no other gods before me*" and "*You shall not make for yourself an idol*" (Ex. 20:3-4). Then He says, "*You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name*" (Ex. 20:7). What we are seeing is a God who is very serious about His name.

God basically says through Psalm 113:3, "My name will be praised from the rising to the setting of the sun." This same verse is quoted again in Malachi 1 when He's rebuking the priest who had defiled His name, and He basically says to them, "Even if you defile my name, I want to remind you that my name will still be praised from the rising to the setting of the sun." God is very serious about His name.

What's In a Name?

The Names of God Provide Revelation of God

Why is He so zealous about His name? Well I think for a number of reasons. Number one, the names of God provide revelation of God. What we need to realize when we talk about some of these names of God is that these are not names that we have made up. These are names that God has revealed Himself to us as. They're gifts of God to us. They're His revelation to us. When Moses is about to go to the Israelites in order to lead them out of Egypt, he says, "*Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' Then what shall I tell them?*" (Ex. 3:13). God says, "*I AM has sent me to you*" (Ex. 3:14).

In Exodus 33:18-19, Moses prays, "*Show me your glory.*" Listen to how the Lord responds. The Lord says, "*I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence.*" So Moses says, "*Show me your glory.*" God says, "I'll show you my name." Here God is equating His name with His glory. This is how God reveals Himself to us in Exodus 33-34. When God does pass by Moses, He starts off proclaiming His name by saying, "*The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness*" (Ex. 34:6-7). The names of God give us revelation from God.

The Names of God Lead to Adoration of God

Second, God's name is His self-revelation that elicits praise among His people. When we sing praises to God, we praise His name. Psalm 8:1 says, "*O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*" The picture is that when we understand the names of God it will fuel our praise to God. Because when we praise God, we praise His name. This is foundational for our worship.

The Names of God Provide Refuge and Protection in God

I love Proverbs 18:10 which says, "*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.*" Isn't that a great verse? The more you understand the name of God, the more you will find a shield and refuge and strength and protection. When life was not going as it was supposed to, and the storm clouds are surrounding you, you find protection in what? You find protection in His name.

The Names of God Symbolize the Location of God's Glory Among His People

Next, when God talks about the Tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament, He talks about the place that will bear His name. Listen to what He says in Deuteronomy 12:5, "*You are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put His name there for His dwelling.*" 1 Kings 9:3 says, "*The Lord said to him: 'I've heard the prayer and plea you've made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my name there forever.'*"

So God's name shows identification with this location and where His glory dwells. Again, we're seeing His name and His glory going together. Now here's the beauty. Why do we need to see that in the Old Testament? Because when you get to the New Testament you don't have a Tabernacle or temple. Instead, what's the temple? The temple of the Spirit of God, the place where God dwells, is our bodies. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, which leads to this next truth.

The Names of God Demonstrate Our Identification with God

You are the temple! You are the place! Let this soak in—you are the place where the name of God dwells! What an amazing thought. We bear His name. Your life bears the name of almighty God. Let that soak in! This causes great humility.

We're baptized into what? We are baptized into His name. Matthew 28:19 says, "...*baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*" Identification with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We're identifying with God.

Ladies and gentlemen we bear the name of God, which is why in Ezekiel 36, He basically says, "I will show the holiness of my great name through you." God shows His name off to the world through our lives. This is huge. We bear His name; we are baptized into His name.

The Name of God is Power for Our Salvation

You get to Psalm 54:1, and the psalmist says, "*Save me, O God, by your name.*" Peter stands up in Acts 4:12 and says, "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved.*"

The Name of God is Authority for our Mission

It's the power of God for our salvation, but not just the power of God for our salvation. The name of God is authority for our mission. I want to show you this. Turn with me to Acts 2. This is worth taking the time to just come aside for a second. Acts 2:38. What's going on here is that after the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost, Peter stood up to preach the first Christian sermon. He gets to the end and everyone's convicted. Then they said, "*Brothers, what shall we do?*" (Acts 2:37), and this is how Peter responds, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*" (Acts 2:38). He says to repent and be baptized in the *name* of Jesus Christ.

Now I want to show you how this is a theme that dominates especially in the next two chapters, but all throughout the book of Acts. Go over to Acts 3. Peter and John go up to the temple and they see a crippled man from birth who's sitting there. He's never walked. Listen to what Peter said, "*Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk*" (Acts 3:6). In the *name* of Christ this man stands up, starts jumping up and down, and praising God. They start getting questioned about what had happened. Then in Acts 3:16 it says—as they're explaining what had happened—"*By faith in the name of Jesus, this man who you know and see is made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given complete healing to him as you can all see.*" Why was he healed? Because of the *name*. They're making it very clear because of His name.

Look with me at Acts 4:7. Here the Sanhedrin brings in Peter and John and want to question them—"*They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: 'By what power or what name did you do this?'*" They start sharing with them in verse 10, "*...Know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified.*" Peter says in verse 12, "*Salvation is found in no one else for there is*

no other name under heaven given to men which we must be saved." Then look at the end of verse 17, where the Sanhedrin catches on and they say, *"But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."* They're afraid of the name. Continue on to verse 18, they call them in again and command them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. You get to the end when the disciples are praying, Acts 4:30, and it says, *"Stretch out your hand to heal and provide miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* Don't miss the picture. The name of Jesus Christ is being proclaimed. All these things have happened, and they're attributed to the *name*.

Now I want to remind you that these things go on throughout the rest of the book of Acts when demons are cast out by the name of Jesus and people are risking their lives for the name of Jesus. I want to remind you that 2,000 years ago there was a name, that when it was proclaimed, caused the lame to walk. When it was proclaimed, it caused the blind to see. When it was proclaimed, it caused countless multitudes to come to faith in Christ. When it was proclaimed, people were risking their life for it. When the name of Jesus was proclaimed, 2,000 years ago, amazing things were happening. I want to remind you—the name is still good today.

It's still good today. The question is not is the name still good. The question is: do the people of God have confidence in His name? His name has not changed. Do we have confidence in the name of Christ?

The Various Names of God

You have proper names, personal names, descriptive names, and titles. There's no way we could even begin to exhaust all the names of God we see. So what I want to do is to focus mostly on proper names, and then on personal names, and a couple descriptive names. I want to give you an overall picture of the names of God.

ELOHIM

"El", or "Elohim", means—He is God. Elohim is actually the plural of "El", and it means God. It's important to know that we are looking at the Hebrew language in a lot of these words. "El" is a word that was often used to refer to false gods. When the Bible says "god", or "gods" in the Old Testament, lower case "g", the word is most often "El." But then, when it's used to refer to the true God, the God of the Bible, then it is "Elohim", which is plural. Some people say that's a picture of the Trinity. Most people say it's just a picture of His supremacy.

It is the most generic name for God—used over 2,700 times in the Bible. Elohim emphasizes His power as creator over all things. Look at Genesis 1, and you will notice that Elohim actually occurs 32 different times in Genesis 1. This is the name of God that we're seeing over, and over again. He is the creator of all things. When He speaks things happen. When He speaks, what He says happen.

He has power as creator of all things, but not just power as creator of all things. But Elohim emphasizes God's sufficiency as sustainer of all things. And you see this, because this name is all over Deuteronomy. The people are wandering through the wilderness, and are reminded of God's deliverance. You see God's sufficiency in the Psalms through all the dimensions we face in life. In Psalm 68, Elohim is mentioned 26 different times, giving us the picture of God's sufficiency. So this is a generic term if I can use that for God. It's a picture of His power as creator, and sufficiency as sustainer. Now that's one of the most popular names for God, but this next one, Yahweh or Jehovah, is probably the most common name for God.

YAHWEH/JEHOVAH

It means—He is the Lord. And I would encourage you, when you write in your notes, to put all caps for the word LORD here. The reason is because in many Bible translations, including the NIV, what you'll see is capital "L", and then small caps O-R-D. Sometimes you'll see Lord mentioned that way. Other times you'll see capital "L", with lower-case "o-r-d." These are actually two different words in the original language of the Old Testament. When you see capital "L", and then the small caps "O-R-D", that's the word Yahweh/ Jehovah. When you see capital "L", lower-case "o-r-d", it's most often "Adonai."

Yahweh is the name that, really above all others, God is revealing Himself as throughout Scripture. For example, you look at Exodus 3, when Moses is having a conversation with the burning bush and

"God said to Moses, 'I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you." " God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "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, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation'" (Ex. 3:14-15).

That's pretty clear. He's showing Himself as Yahweh. The reason you have Jehovah there is because often times, Yahweh was not pronounced or spoken. People out of reverence for the name of God would not pronounce it. So they, in some ways, filled in the vowels and the consonants there, and just referred to this name of God as Jehovah.

Exodus 6:2-8 is a very important passage. This is God speaking to Moses about delivering them out of Egypt:

God also said to Moses, '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, where they lived as aliens. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. Therefore, say to the Israelites: "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.'

Now here's the covenant. Look at how important the name of the Lord is in these words. This passage is filled with promises, but it is book ended, and saturated, in the middle by the name.

This is God revealing Himself as the LORD, when He says, "You will know that I am the LORD." This is the most common name for God—used over 6,800 times in the Bible. All throughout Scripture we see Him pretty much saying, "I do what I do, that you might know that I am the Lord."

Remember when God led His people to the Red Sea, splits it in half, and sends them through in the middle? Why does He do that? Why does He take them on this journey, and split the Red Sea in half? Just to show them something cool? No, He did it—Exodus 14:4 says—so that *"The Egyptians will see my power and they will know that I am the Lord."* He said, "So they'll know that I'm am the Lord. I do this that you know I am the Lord." This name was revealed at the covenant, just like we read in Exodus 3, 6, and 20. It shows, more than anything, His covenant relationship with His people.

Now, when He said in Exodus 6:2, *"I did not make myself known to [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob],"* that doesn't mean that He wasn't referred to as LORD before this point. In fact we'll see in just a second that He was referred to as LORD back in the beginning of Genesis. However, this was a covenant name that symbolized His relationship with His people that He's making very clear here with Moses and the people of Israel.

The name was revealed at critical times in redemptive history when God is performing mighty acts, like in Isaiah 43.

The name was revealed in Christ when you get to the New Testament. Jesus says in John 8:58, *"I tell you the truth."* Jesus answered before Abraham was born "I am." Now if you don't know the context of the Old Testament, then that seems kind of strange. What does that mean?" When Jesus says this, He is identifying Himself with Yahweh in the Old Testament. We know this because right after John 8:58, the Jews try to stone Him, because they think He's blaspheming. He's claiming to be equal with God.

What you see is Jesus identifying Himself with the God of the Old Testament. That's why you see all those "I am" statements in John—John 6:35, *"I am the bread of life"*; John 8:12, *"I am the light of the world"*; John 10:11, *"I am the good shepherd"*; John 10:9, *"I am the gate"*; John 11:25, *"I am the resurrection and the life"*; John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"*; John 15:1, *"I am the true vine."* Jesus saying "I am" is intentional—I am, I am, I am. It's all over the place.

That's why when you get to Acts 2:36, at the end of the first Christian sermon, you see that it's summed up like this, *"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."* Jesus is Lord. When you look at Old Testament faith, Old Testament faith says "Confess God as Lord." Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which is the Shema, says, *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."* This was like Israel's statement of faith.

You get to New Testament faith, and New Testament faith says "Confess Christ as Lord." Romans 10 makes clear that faith in Christ is faith in God—*"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"* (Rom. 10:9). Knowing God, at the fundamental core, is knowing Him as Lord.

The name "LORD" emphasizes a lot of the different attributes of God. Number one, "LORD" emphasizes God's personality. It's the name of a person as He relates to His people. Hosea 3:1-5 is a good reminder. If you remember, Hosea is the picture of God comparing His relationship to His people like a husband to an adulteress wife. And the picture is so amazing, especially in Hosea 3, when God tells Hosea to go and to pay the price to buy back his adulteress wife who has turned her back on him to go after other lovers. And this is the picture that the LORD gives to say, "You are my people. I am your God." It's a personal name.

"LORD" emphasizes God's goodness. Exodus 34, it's a picture of "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate, gracious God." Let me show you this. Look in Genesis 2 and 3. Some of you are thinking, "What does this really matter? We've got the different names. Why do we need to know the different names? Why do we need to know capital 'L', small caps 'O-R-D', means Yahweh? Why is that important?"

Let me show you why it's important and how it helps us understand Scripture. Look in Genesis 2. I want you to see how God is referred to in Genesis 2. You might circle them every time. This is when He creates Adam and Eve. He gives them instructions in the garden. Look at Genesis 2:4, and about halfway through it says, "When the LORD God"—you might circle it there. That's how He's referred to. You see "LORD"—Yahweh, and then "God" is Elohim. So you have His goodness emphasized and His greatness. We talked about Elohim showing His greatness, His power as creator of all things.

Then you get to Genesis 2:5, which says, *"...no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not set rain on the earth."* Verse 7, *"The LORD God formed the man."* Verse 8, *"The LORD God had planted a garden in the east."* Verse 9, *"And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground."* Verse 15, *"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden."* Verse 16, *"And the LORD God commanded the man."* Verse 18, *"The LORD God said it is not good for the man to be alone."* Verse 19, *"Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground."* Verse 21, *"So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep."* Verse 22, *"Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib."*

Over and over again you see that God is mentioned as the "LORD" God. You have both these names together. You get to Genesis 3:1, and you see the same thing. It says, *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made."* Now watch this. The serpent said to the woman, *"Did God really say?"* I want you to notice how the word for Yahweh is dropped here. This is the serpent, the adversary, tempting Eve to bring the first sin into the world. He drops the word for Yahweh, and says, *"Did God really say 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"* (Gen. 3:1). Eve replies, *"But God did say"* (Gen. 3:3). Then Genesis 3:5 says, *"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Then you get to Genesis 3:8 after sin had entered the world—*"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God";* Verse 9, *"But the LORD God";* Verse 13, *"Then the LORD God";* Verse 14, *"So the LORD God."* That word for Yahweh is back. You see that in the middle. Now why is that so important? Don't miss it. The first sin came into the world, when the adversary pretty much said, "God has power but He is not good. He doesn't love you. He doesn't know what is best for you." Isn't this the picture of sin? The temptation is for us to hear the lies of the adversary saying to us, *"You know what's best for you. God has power and He's keeping you from what's best for you."*

You see that even in that first temptation. But the beauty of Genesis 3 is that after sin enters the world, we still have a picture of God, who is good, seeking after His people. The LORD God is seeking after Adam and Eve. That is why these are so important. It emphasizes His goodness.

Next, "LORD" emphasizes God's power. This name emphasizes His power, and "LORD" emphasizes God's authority. This is particularly significant. Look at Leviticus 18:2-4. God is giving commands, and He says, *"I am the LORD your God. You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan...You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees."* Keep my decrees and laws, God says.

God says this because He has all authority. This is particularly significant when you get to Philippians 2:9-11. This name, of the LORD, is applied and attributed to Christ. Paul says, *"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* This is key. Ladies and gentlemen, you do not make Jesus LORD of your life. He is LORD of your life, whether you want to make Him that, or not. He is LORD. The question is not, "Is He LORD?" The question is, "Have you submitted your life to His lordship?" God, forgive us for thinking that we can make you LORD. You are LORD. You are king. You are creator. You have all authority, and every single person in this room will one day bow at the feet of Jesus, and call Him LORD. But the question is—will you do it now, or will you do it when it's too late? He is the Lord. He has power and authority.

And finally, "LORD" emphasizes God's presence. *"What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to Him?"* (Deut. 4:7). God is close to us.

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