

*Experiencing*  
**GOD**  
by  
**HIS NAMES**

DICK PURNELL



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## EXPERIENCING GOD BY HIS NAMES

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*To God the Father.  
This book is for You.  
How I praise Your name that someday the  
Son will hand everything over to You.*



*Then the end will come, when [Christ] hands over  
the kingdom to God the Father  
after he has destroyed  
all dominion, authority and power.  
1 Corinthians 15:24*

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# Introduction

When you meet someone new, what is the first thing you say? Usually, it's something like, "Hi, my name is..." How many names do you give? Probably two—first and last. Rarely, you might give three names—first, middle, and last. Or you may have a hyphenated first or last name or more than one middle name. How would you react if someone you just met introduced him- or herself by giving you *ten* names? While the person was saying all those names, you'd probably be thinking, "This is taking too much time!" or "I'll never remember all these names." If ten is too many, how would you react if the person responded by giving you more than 250 names? You'd probably be sorry you asked.

But if the Person is God, you'd want to hear all His names, wouldn't you? Sure you would! Each of God's names means something so significant that it gives you a glimpse of His magnificent character and the way He acts.

Unlike you and me, God's names weren't given to Him by someone else. No one looked in a book of baby names to choose which ones they liked so they could pick some nice names to give Him. God chose His own names. Your parents decided on your name; God chose names for Himself that reveal who He is and what He's like. Why? Because He wants us to know and understand Him and His ways. Our finite minds are so limited that we need a helpful way to comprehend the vast complexity of God's character and actions. So He chose each of His names to give us a window into Himself.

The huge array of God's names is like a mosaic. A mosaic is a beautiful picture or pattern made up of many small, individual pieces. Each one contains a small section of the whole picture. When you look closely at one piece, you see a little bit of color and maybe some lines. It looks pretty, but it's difficult to figure out what the whole mosaic will look like. Take a few steps back and gaze at the pieces of the mosaic. You can see more colors and lines that fit together, and you begin to notice a pattern. Step back

again, and you see more pieces. The more you see, the more the gorgeous picture unfolds and the more you understand the intent of the artist. Likewise, each of God's names gives us insight into a part of His character and ways. The more names we know, the more we know about God and how He behaves. In fact, God reveals more than 250 of His names so that we can get to know and understand Him—as much as human beings can possibly comprehend a supreme, heavenly Being.

But knowledge of God is just the beginning of His desires for us. The more we learn about God through His names, the more we'll want to become like Him. And the more we want to become like Him, the harder we'll try—well, as much as any sinful human being can.

Though God reveals Himself through many names, each name doesn't refer to a different God. There is only *one* God; however, there are three Persons in the godhead or trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. You've heard some of their names already: Lord, Father, Jesus, Son, Christ, Savior, Holy Spirit, and so forth. But there are many more names God has chosen to use to reveal Himself to us.

For this book, I've chosen 140 of God's names for us to study. I believe that as you learn more about these unique names, you'll discover a much larger picture of who God is and your love for Him will deepen. So get ready for an exciting adventure into aspects of God few others know.

## Translating God's Names

Before we dig in, let's consider this question: What is a "name"? For us humans, it's simply an identifier that separates us from others. For God, it's different. Each name has an important meaning. But picking out His names in the Bible isn't always so simple for two reasons.

First, various versions of the Bible translate the same Hebrew and Greek words differently. (The Old Testament was written in Hebrew; the New Testament was written in Greek.) Take, for example, John 15:26: "When the *Advocate* comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me." The name "Advocate" used here is the translation of the Greek word *parakletos*. That's how the 2011 edition of New International Version translated the word. However, the same exact word in the 1984 New International Version was translated "Counselor." The King James Bible translates *parakletos* as "Comforter"; the New American Standard Bible translates it

as “Helper”; and the Message Bible translates it as “Friend.” Five different words translated from the same original word! To minimize the confusion of various translations, I’ve chosen the 2011 New International Version for all the names found in this book. If you use a different translation of the Bible, it may use other names instead of the ones listed in this book. I encourage you to keep reading though. You’ll learn a lot even if you use a different Bible as your “go to” version.

One other important note on translations. Throughout the Old Testament there are two distinctly different Hebrew words that are translated into the English word “Lord.” Whenever you see the word LORD in small capitals, this is a translation of the Hebrew word *Yahweh*, which the Old Testament Jewish scholars changed to *Jehovah*. This is the most frequent name of God given in the Old Testament, and it appears more than 6,000 times. Another Hebrew word, *Adonai*, which means “master” or “owner,” is also translated as “Lord.” To differentiate these two Hebrew words, the translators designated *Adonai* as “Lord” with regular uppercase and lowercase letters. This difference, however, doesn’t carry over into the New Testament. There’s only one Greek word, *kurios*, that’s translated “Lord.”

Second, there are five *types* of names for God. It’s helpful to understand the differences.

- *Type one*—personal names. These are names God calls Himself. For example, “Living One”: “I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades” (Revelation 1:18). “LORD” (English translation of *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*) is God’s primary name to all generations (Exodus 3:15).
- *Type two*—possessive names. These names link one of God’s names with a specific noun using the connector word “of.” For example, “King of glory”: “Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the *King of glory* may come in” (Psalm 24:7). God reigns and possesses the attribute of glory. Other possessive names include “God of Israel,” “Lord of lords,” and “Spirit of grace.”
- *Type three*—descriptive names. These reveal characteristics or attributes about God, such as “Rock”: “The LORD lives!

Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be my God, the Rock, my Savior!” (2 Samuel 22:47). God is not literally a rock, but He is *personified* as a rock because He has attributes like a rock—immovable, unchanging, strong. He uses the word as a description of one aspect of His character.

Other descriptive names connect an adjective to a noun that qualifies a particular aspect of God. He is called “Chief Shepherd”: “And when the *Chief Shepherd* appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away” (1 Peter 5:4). Out of all the leaders and shepherds of people, God is preeminent over all of them. He is the chief one. Additional descriptive names are “Morning Star,” “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” and “true vine.”

- *Type four*—symbolic names. These represent one of His qualities, such as “Prince of Peace”: “To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, *Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6). He is like a prince over a kingdom. In this case, He is the ruler over the kingdom of peace, a symbol of His authority to bring peace and govern it. The Bible is filled with symbolic names, including “Lamb,” “Word of God,” “Overseer,” and “Root of Jesse.”
- *Type five*—ascribed names. People addressed God by these names. For example, God is called “Son of the Blessed One” by the chief priest: “Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’” (Mark 14:61). Jesus certainly was the Son of God. The chief priest asked that question to goad Jesus into incriminating Himself so the religious leaders could get evidence of blasphemy (an ordinary human claiming to be God).

These five types help us get a clearer picture of the vast mosaic of God’s magnificent character. Each name gives us a greater understanding of how superb and complex our Lord is.

## God Reveals His Names in a Progression

One of the main features of this book is that the names you'll read about are given in chronological order. The Bible wasn't written chronologically; it was written in sections. The Old Testament has 39 "books" in it, and they are presented in different categories. The first five books of the Bible (Genesis through Deuteronomy) are the "history of the beginning of Israel and the giving of the Law of God." The books from Joshua through Esther are the "history of Israel." The rest of the Old Testament contains poetic and prophetic books that fit into various chapters in the history of Israel.

The book of Psalms, for example, is made up of individual songs that were composed by a variety of authors who lived at different times. To understand many of the psalms, it's beneficial to understand the time and situation of the author. So studying when the author of a particular psalm lived during the historical books, such as 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, will help us better understand what he wrote.

*Experiencing God by His Names* does the "figuring out" work for you. Each name is in the order it's used in the Bible because God revealed His character through His names in a progressive manner. He opened people's minds differently throughout biblical history. For instance, "angel of the LORD," referring to the preexistent Christ, is given in Genesis 16, while others, such as "Morning Star," referring to the glorified Christ as the sign of a new heaven and new earth, are revealed only in the book of Revelation. God waited thousands of years of human history to share those unique names in Revelation because they are meant to display the culmination of His grand plan for the ages.

## Getting the Most out of This Book

As you read and think about each of God's names, you'll come to understand 140 aspects of His character that will, hopefully, open your mind and heart to His magnificently complex Person. Each name written in this book gives you opportunities to internalize its meaning and to trust God to work His revealed character into your life.

There are a few additional features in each devotion to make your reading more meaningful. At the beginning of each devotion—after the name is given and the verse cited—is a short FYI (For Your Information) feature with a bit more information about the occurrence of that name in

the Bible. I think you'll find it useful. You may find it interesting to know what was happening historically that led up to God placing that specific name in that verse. You may also use it to consider what God was trying to convey to the person or nation He was addressing. Why did the person or people use that name? I hope you'll come up with answers that will help you draw strength from that name and aspect of God when you face similar situations.

I've always found it helpful to read the context of the verse (the paragraphs or chapter before and after the verse cited) to put myself into the mindset of the people or nation involved. Write down the verses that are meaningful to you so you can work on memorizing them. When you encounter challenges to your faith that relate to the name you just studied, you can trust God to act according to His name.

Also in the FYI sections you may find more verses to enhance your understanding of God's specific character. Look them up in your Bible or pursue them on a Bible app using smart technology. Become a biblical detective and follow the additional information. To do this, you may want to spend two or three days investigating all the leads you find to take some of the mystery out of God's names so you'll understand Him even more.

At the end of each devotion, there are two application points:

- *Question for the Day.* Think about your answer to the question and ponder what it means for you personally. Don't rush on to the next name or wander to another subject. Stop and question yourself. Mull over the question. Ask God to open your heart and mind to better understand how He wants to affect your life through that particular meaning of His name.
- *Prayer.* You'll have an opportunity to talk with God regarding the aspect of His name you just read about. The prayer at the end of each discussion addresses God using that specific name. This will help you focus on the Lord using the name that relates directly to the need you're concerned about.

Jesus made this huge promise: "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:13-14). Ponder that promise for a moment. Let it sink into your mind. He promised to answer all our



prayers *as long as we ask in His name*. With the knowledge gained from this book, you'll be able to pray using God's names that relate specifically to your situation. Your prayers will be more intimate and meaningful. When you pray, you can consider, *What is my need that I want answered, and what is His name that corresponds most to that need?*

For instance, if you feel anxious or nervous, you can pray to God as the Prince of Peace. As such, He will bring His peace into your heart and mind. When making a decision, you can ask the Chief Shepherd to lead you to the right choice and to protect you from obstacles. God loves to respond to people who believe He'll act according to His character. When He answers those prayers He is glorified because it shows that the praying person really does know, believe, and trust in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is *dynamic faith*—growing in knowledge and confidence in God's trustworthiness to do what He says He will do. Hebrews 11:6 states it like this: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

*Experiencing God by His Names* isn't just for personal study and the development of your faith. There are many Christians who need to know the beautiful mosaic of God's character. If your loved ones, friends, and coworkers understand more of the mystery about God's names, would their lives improve? Would they more easily witness God working through their faith and prayers if they knew more about Him and obeyed Him more consistently? Sure they would. For these reasons, I encourage you to share what you learn about God through His names. You can do it. Jesus said, "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (Luke 6:45). You may even want to start a small group to study the mysteries of God's names. Here are some suggestions for such a group study.

1. Spend one week on each name. Ask participants to become biblical detectives to find out as much as they can about that name. You can assign a variety of similar names for people to research.
2. Text or tweet each other during the week about what you're discovering. Put your discoveries on social media for your

friends to read about. That will encourage them to learn more about God.

3. In your group time, discuss the discoveries each person has made during the week. Some may want to give short reports. Some people may have questions to ask that will generate good discussions.
4. Invite the participants to share their needs and concerns. Then lead the group to pray for those things using the names of God that relate to the requests.
5. Find songs to sing together that use the names of God you're studying. You can even make up songs and poems about His beautiful attributes. Worship the Lord by praising His names specifically and thanking Him for how He's demonstrating His character in each person's life.

Finally, don't stop with the names explored in this book. Use them as a launching pad for further study and discovery about our wonderful Lord. In my other book, *Knowing God by His Names*, you'll find 206 names for God, along with lots of application ideas to expand your faith and trust Him to work in your life.

I'm convinced that the more you learn about God and His many names, the more you'll love Him. And the more you love Him, the more you'll trust Him to work in your life.

# Angel of the LORD

## Look Who Takes the First Step

*The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert (Genesis 16:7).*

**FYI:** The term “angel of the LORD” (*Yahweh*) appears 54 times in the Old Testament. Ten of those times are in the book of Numbers. Most often, the name is a reference to God in human form—namely the preincarnate Christ. The angel of the LORD stepped into human history long before He came to earth as a baby.

God isn’t sitting in heaven hoping we’ll seek Him. If He was, no one would ever come to know the true God. All of us have sinned and gone our own way. Thankfully, however, *God steps in and intervenes* on our behalf. For instance, one time the angel of the LORD entered into a mother’s desperate situation as she frantically ran away from a horrible situation.

Sarai was infertile and urged her husband, Abram, to father a child with her Egyptian slave, Hagar. But when Hagar became pregnant, Sarai mistreated Hagar so much that the slave ran away. She was an abused, pregnant woman with no food, no shelter, no particular destination—totally without help or hope.

That’s when the angel of the LORD appeared to Hagar and told her to return to her mistress. The angel also said, “I will increase your descendants,” and told Hagar about her future son. The angel of LORD initiated contact to encourage Hagar and save her life.

Have you ever felt like Hagar? Like no one cared, and you wouldn’t be missed if you were gone? There is someone who cares about you—God! He will rescue you in your times of need. Call on Him now if you’re in need.

**Question for Today:** Do you need to be rescued from something in your life? Do you need the angel of the LORD to intervene and give you hope? Ask Him.

**Prayer:** Angel of the LORD, help me keep my feet on Your solid ground instead of running away. Rescue me from the messes in my life and give me hope.

# God Who Sees

## No Darkness Is Too Dark

*[Hagar] gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me" (Genesis 16:13).*

**FYI:** This is the only time "God Who Sees" (*El Roi*) appears in the Bible. The name *El Roi* is a combination of two significant Hebrew words. *El* means all-powerful, all mighty. It is the root of *Elohim*, which is translated "God," the first name given for our wonderful Lord in Genesis 1:1. *Roi* means "to see." When these two words are put together, *El Roi* means "the all-powerful God who sees everything in the universe."

The LORD God promised Abram and his wife, Sarai, that they would have a child even though they were very old (Genesis 15; 17:15-16). God told Abram that he would become the father of a great number of people. But after years of trying to conceive, Sarai couldn't get pregnant. She became impatient and told Abram to father a child with Hagar, her servant.

When Hagar became pregnant, Sarai treated her with jealousy and hatred. Hagar couldn't stand Sarai's abuse any longer, so she ran away into the desert. But Hagar couldn't escape *El Roi*, "the God who sees." God saw her in that dry wasteland where, perhaps, Hagar had thought no one would be able to find her. God saw her and came to her in her distress.

Do you think God sees you? Do you think He cares about you? When you walk in darkness or experience a time of distress, you may feel abandoned, lonely, powerless, or wounded. During those times, do you ask, "Where is God?" Perhaps intellectually you know that God is there, but emotionally you may feel He's hiding from you. Wherever you are, *El Roi* sees you. Even if you go to the most remote part of His universe, He still sees you. You may be surrounded by darkness, but He sees you as if you were flooded with sunshine. When there are no lights, it is difficult or impossible to see. You feel invisible to others in the darkness. But you are not invisible to *El Roi*! He sees you. You can be in the middle of a crowd of people and feel as if you're all alone...yet He sees you. When you feel abandoned, irrelevant, or lost...He sees. Hagar could not outrun *El Roi*'s

presence. Neither can you. When you feel you can't take one more step, He is there with you. You are *never* out of His sight.

**Question for Today:** When do you feel like God doesn't see you?

**Prayer:** God who sees, thank You for being here with me right now. Thank You for truly *seeing* me.

# God Almighty

## Power to Fulfill Promises

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless” (Genesis 17:1).*

**FYI:** “God Almighty” in the Old Testament is a translation of two Hebrew words: *El* and *Shaddai*. *El* means “all-powerful.” *Shaddai* means “breast.” When these two words are combined, they mean “He is the all-powerful One who satisfies, nourishes, and sustains us.”

Abram had a hard time believing that the Lord would give him a son in his old age. He was 99 years old, and Sarai, his wife, was 90. God spoke to Abram and said He would give Sarai and him a son even though both were well beyond child-bearing ages. *El Shaddai* brought life to their old bodies, and Sarai became the mother of Isaac (Genesis 17:15-16,19; 20:1-3).

Discouragement and disappointment are twins of the same parents—difficult circumstances and adversity. Expectations about life can be dashed when contrary circumstances hit. When you face times like these, you don’t want to hear pious platitudes. You need real solutions. At such times, *God Almighty* shows up on your scene. He is the ultimate life-changer. What He promises, He will fulfill.

When you focus on yourself, you’ll experience disappointments and weaknesses. But God hasn’t left you alone! He is *El Shaddai*, the God who sustains and nourishes you—not by your strength, but by *His* life-giving strength. He is utterly faithful in all His ways. Because He is *El Shaddai*, He is worthy of your complete trust.

**Question for Today:** What makes you feel discouraged?

**Prayer:** God Almighty, bring me new life to defeat my weariness and discouragement. Do great things in me. Be *El Shaddai* in my life.

# Judge of All the Earth

## There Is Right and Wrong

*[Abraham said to the LORD,] “Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25).*

**FYI:** “Judge of all the earth” appears only in Genesis 18:25. Sodom and Gomorrah were cities in southern Palestine near the Dead Sea. They were prosperous, important cities, but the people who lived in them were corrupt and evil. The Lord told Abraham that He was going to destroy the cities and their inhabitants. Abraham pleaded with the Lord to spare the cities if righteous people lived there. The Lord couldn’t find ten innocent people.

Every day in the news we read stories about people who have victimized the innocent. History is filled with murders, frauds, thefts, scandals, and a host of other evil actions. Sometimes the judges who were supposed to uphold truth and justice were also corrupt. Wicked people go unpunished because of technicalities and bribes. Where is justice in those situations?

With God as “Judge of all the earth,” we find true justice. He can only do what is right and just. And someday each of us will stand before this Judge of all the earth who knows our every thought, attitude, motive, and action. Evil and sin can’t escape His knowledge or His judgment. No one can deceive Him or avoid notice.

Have you suffered injustice? Has a loved one of yours been victimized? Be assured of this: Someday all wrongs will receive just penalties, and the righteous will be vindicated by the Judge of all the earth.

**Question for Today:** How do you feel about the Judge of all the earth judging everyone? How do you feel about Him judging you?

**Prayer:** Thank You, Judge of all the earth, that You are just and can only do right.