



**A KID'S GUIDE TO
THE
NAMES
OF GOD**

TONY EVANS



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So Many Names!

When someone asks you, “What’s your name?” you usually respond by saying your first name, right? Jacob. Elizabeth. Devon. Maddie. Aaron. But you have other names too. Like your middle name. Or your last name. You also probably have at least one nickname. And if you do stuff online, you have a user name or a screen name—something you chose to reflect who you are. It could be *Gymnasticsgirl123* or *Pianoguy1*. So many names!

When someone gets to know you, they get to know all your names—not just your first name. And if they know you really well, they might even give you a fun nickname. We connect with each other through our names. And when someone uses your name, it makes you feel special—you feel known and important.

It’s important to learn the names of other people—our classmates, our teachers, our neighbors. And it’s also important to learn the names of God. Wait—what? God has more than one name? Actually, God has a whole bunch of names! He wants us to learn about His names because that helps us

get to know Him better. It also helps us connect with Him and grow closer to Him.

Getting to know God by His names is more than simply learning a new word for “God” or figuring out how to pronounce a title He uses. Learning to know God by His names helps us figure out who He is and to experience His awesome power. It’s a really terrific way to get to know the Creator of the universe on a more personal level.

Your parents might have named you after a relative or chosen your name just because they really liked how it sounds. Those are both great reasons to be given a name, but in the Bible, people were named for a different reason. Names had a lot of meaning attached to them back then. In fact, Scripture often mentions God Himself changing someone’s name to show that something important happened.

For example, Abram means “exalted father,” but when God promised Abram he would have many descendants, God changed his name to Abraham, which means “father of a multitude.” Jacob, whose name means “deceiver,” received a new name after wrestling with God. His new name, Israel, means “one who prevails.” And in the New Testament, when Jesus told His disciples He would build His church on a solid foundation, He changed Simon’s name to Peter, which means “rock.”

One time, when Jesus was praying to the Father, He said, “I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known” (John 17:26). And by “name,” Jesus wasn’t just talking about letters put together to spell a word. He was explaining that God’s heart, mind, will, character, and being—all that God is—would be revealed through His name.

God's names also affect how we interact with Him. We can use one of His names when we're scared, another when we're praising Him, and yet another when we're sick and asking Him for healing. Did you know that God has a name for every situation we find ourselves in? He does!

Now, our own names don't necessarily mean a lot. A child might have the name of a famous person—like Michael Phelps or Taylor Swift—but not be a fast swimmer or a talented singer. The name alone contains no special power. Yet when that name *is* connected to the quality it represents, the result is powerful. And that's the deal with God's names—they all have power. Also, God is so amazing and awesome and incredible that one name alone can't fully tell us all we need to know about Him.

I'm completely convinced that God wants nothing more than for us to truly know Him. And we get to know Him better by knowing His names—what they mean, when we should use them, and why they're so important. Throughout the Bible, when God revealed Himself to His people in a new way, He often revealed a new name.

Here's a great example of this. When God asked Moses to lead the Israelites out of a difficult and challenging situation, He empowered Moses by revealing one of His names. "Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you." Now they may say to me, "What is His name?" What shall I say to them?'" (Exodus 3:13). In this situation, Moses needed to know God's name. He knew that God's power and authority were attached to His name—and that the Israelites would pay way more attention than if Moses had used

his own name. (In chapter 2, we'll see God's response to Moses.)

God had a name for Moses to use to show the Israelites His power, and God has a name for you to use in whatever situation you're facing—fear, friendship troubles, school stress, sickness, worry, or whatever. No matter what name you use, God is always there for you—and you can get to know Him better and better as you learn more of His names and understand how they teach you different things about His character.

Don't worry if this seems a little bit complicated. With God's help, you've got this! In fact, in the New Testament, Jesus tells us that God often reveals His awesomeness, excellence, and splendor to those who have childlike hearts: "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants" (Matthew 11:25).

Now, if God is willing and able to reveal Himself to babies, He will undoubtedly reveal Himself to you. All it takes is your willingness to learn. And a great way to start learning more about God—who He is, what He does, and how He cares for you—is to learn some of His names.

A big thing to remember is that God's name—no matter which one we're using—is "hallowed," which is another word for holy. We're not supposed to mix up His name with anyone else's name or toss it out lightly. All of God's names are holy, so we are to honor them, respect them, and treat them with reverence.

Here's a good way to look at this. If the president of the United States or the governor of your state were to walk into a room, you wouldn't address him or her by his or her

first name. The position demands a certain level of recognition. You wouldn't say, "Hey, dude, what's up?" You would place the title in front of the name and speak it with respect.

God is to be treated with more respect than we would show to anyone else. He is the one and only true God, and we need to treat Him accordingly. This isn't to say that God is mean or scary. He's not. He wants the best for us, and He wants to walk alongside us as we go through life. But He is God, and we always need to remember that. When God isn't treated as He rightfully should be treated, He doesn't take that lightly. And that will affect your relationship with Him.

It's hard to really know God without knowing and understanding some of His names. Have you ever felt as if someone was trying to judge you—to tell you who you are (or tell other people who you are) without truly getting to know you first? A lot of people try to do this with God, but it doesn't work. Why not? Because they don't actually know Him personally.

The better you understand God's names, the more you will worship Him. And by learning several of His names, you'll come to know Him in new ways as He shows up in your life to guide you and direct you and challenge you and love you.

When we know God's names—and honor them and experience the power they represent—we get to know Him better. We see His power working in our lives. We are tuned in to Him, so we notice the amazing things He does for us. And we start sharing His love with others.

Learning God's names together will be exciting! Get ready to discover God in ways you've never imagined and to get to know and experience Him through His powerful and amazing names.

GOD PROVIDES FOR ME!

God is active in your life right now. Even if you can't see Him—like you see your mom or your brother or your cat—He's there. Write down your responses to these questions, and as you do, imagine seeing God right there in your everyday life.

- What did you see or hear (or even smell!) when you woke up this morning and looked around your room and outside?

- What did you eat today?

- What clothing did you wear today?

- What are some things you did for exercise today? (Think about exercising your brain as well as your body!)

- Who did you talk to and laugh with today?

Remember, God is right there with you today—
everywhere you go and in everything you do.

Elohim

The Strong Creator God



If I say Starbucks, what comes to mind? (Coffee, right?) What about Speedo? (Swimming!) Apple? (Computers and technology.) Gatorade? (Sports drinks.) Levi's? (Jeans.) When a brand name is totally familiar, it's easy to get a mental image of the product.

It's kind of the same thing with the names of God once you get to know them. Of course, God isn't selling you a phone or a drink or clothing. He wants you to become familiar with His names because that's one of the best ways to get to know Him better and experience all He has to offer you—which is way better than coffee or even a new computer!

Your brand is your identity. It includes your reputation—what others think about you. When people refer to the Apple brand, they're not talking about an apple with a bite

taken out of it. They're talking about what the Apple company stands for—high-quality and innovative electronic devices, like phones and tablets and computers. As we get to know God by discovering His names in Scripture, we see that He has branded His names. They're not just words. Each of those names carries a lot of meaning.

God's names matter! Attached to each one is a set of character qualities, promises, and meanings. And when you know about these things, you discover more of the awesome things He has in store for you.

So let's get straight to the very first name God reveals to us in Scripture—Elohim. We find this name in the first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

When you introduce yourself to someone, the first thing you tell them about yourself is your first name. It's the main thing you want someone to know about you—the one thing that will make them feel like they know you right away. Same deal with God. It's as if in this verse, He's telling us, "Hello, I'm Elohim." And that name—Elohim—means "Creator." It's the first impression He wants us to have of Him.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First impressions are often lasting impressions. Sometimes our first impression—what we think right away when we meet someone—is right, but sometimes it's wrong. Either way, it's usually lasting, especially if we don't continue getting to know the person.

- What were some of your first impressions of your best friend?

- Which of these first impressions were right, and which were wrong?

- What would you want someone's first impressions of you to be?

- What can you do or say so someone will have a correct first impression of you?

- When you think of God's creation, what's your first impression of Him ?

One of the main reasons God introduces Himself to us as Elohim, the strong Creator God, is that He wants us to know He's distinct—or separate—from His creation. God is not a tree or a river or a butterfly. He created trees and rivers and butterflies, but He is above and outside of His creation. It's like when you create a painting or construct something out of Legos. You aren't the painting or the Lego creation—even though those things reflect who you are. You are their creator. You're the one who thought up the idea and painted the picture or put the Legos together.

Here, There, and Everywhere!

Another reason God introduces Himself to us as Elohim is to let us know that He is set apart from our ideas of time and space. This can get a little bit confusing, but what's important to remember is that God created everything. And that includes time. So when the Bible says, "In the beginning God created," it must mean that God created the beginning. And that God created time. And—hang with me here!—that if time didn't begin until He created it, then He must have existed before it.

That's a big, brain-stretching idea, isn't it? Think for a minute about the idea of eternity.

- What does the word "eternity" mean to you?

- We think in terms of what happened yesterday, today, and tomorrow. What happened to you yesterday?

- What's going on today?

- What do you have planned for tomorrow?

For God, it's a little bit different—a lot different, actually. God doesn't have a yesterday or a tomorrow. That's because He exists outside of our idea of time. Everything for God is *right now* because He has no past and no future. He's eternal—or always. He is the right-now, ever-present God. Which is really comforting to know. He's always there—always has been, always will be. Forever.

When we get to heaven, we'll understand this better. (Whew!) But for now, it's nice to know that God is always with us, no matter where we are. So that's the “time” part. Now about the “space” part.

You and I know and experience only the heavens and the earth. There's a lot to our heavens and earth—the oceans

and mountains, moon and stars, rain forests and deserts. Yet the Creator God—Elohim—is beyond all this. He is here, there, and everywhere. He created the heavens and the earth, existing outside of it. But He also fills the heavens and the earth, existing in it. He is everywhere. The word used to describe this is “omnipresent”—everywhere-present at the same time.

God is here, yet He is also there. Elohim—our Creator—is here, there, and everywhere at the same time. No wonder our world is so amazing—it was made by such an amazing Creator!

Take It Personally

With all of this talk about God being here, there, and everywhere, we might be tempted to think of Him as an energy source. Yet the name Elohim doesn't mean God is like that. The Bible would never say, “May the force be with you.” God isn't a sci-fi character. He's not a robot that's hard to figure out. He's not an otherworldly being that we just need to accept and be amazed at—as in, “I could never get to know a God like that.” Not at all.

Yes, God is amazing, but what's even more amazing is that He wants you to learn about Him and know Him. He's not just a supersmart energy source; He's your personal Creator.

When we read Genesis 1—the first chapter of the first book of the Bible—we see His name Elohim associated with some very personal characteristics:

Then God [Elohim] said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light day, and the darkness He called night (verses 3-5).

Look back at those verses and see if you can find the verbs—the things that God did. (Hint: There are four words, and one of them is used twice.) Write them down here.

God said. God saw. God separated. And God called. Each of these actions clearly shows how God is personally involved with His creation. He's not merely a spirit floating around in never-never land. Yes, He exists outside of our ideas of time and space (that brain-stretching idea again!), but He is also actively connected to His creation—to our world and to *us*. If we read ahead a little bit in Genesis, we find God walking with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, hanging out with them in the cool of the day and talking to them (Genesis 3:8-9).

So if we refer to God as an energy, a concept, a force, or an idea, we are not referring to Elohim. As Elohim, God personally interacts with His creation. Yes, God is an amazing Creator, but He is also a personal God who walks with us and talks with us. How awesome is that!

Creativity

God identifies Himself as Elohim 35 times at the start of Scripture. In fact, Elohim is the only name used for God from Genesis 1:1 to Genesis 2:3. Other names come later as God reveals more about Himself throughout His Word, but Elohim is emphasized in the beginning.

All names have a literal translation—an actual meaning. Do you know what your name means? (If you don't, look it up or ask your parents.) Do you think your name fits you? Why or why not?

God's names always fit Him. I believe that God first introduces Himself to us as Elohim, the strong Creator God, because He wants us to understand His power. The literal translation—or actual meaning—of the name Elohim is “strong one.” It has to do with His power, and that includes His power to create. The Bible uses the term “created” only when talking about God—never when talking about others. This is because only God has the ability to create something out of nothing. He has the ultimate creativity!

People can make incredible things, but only God has the ability to create something from nothing at all. Think about some different ways you can be creative. What are some things you can make?

Now, write down the materials or ingredients or resources you need to make these things.

If you're knitting a scarf, you need yarn and knitting needles, right? (And the knitting needles are made of metal or plastic, and someone needed fiber and dye to make the yarn.) If you're baking a cake, you need flour, eggs, sugar, and other ingredients. If you're building a bookshelf, you need wood and nails as well as a hammer and saw. Everything comes from something!

Anyone who designs, builds, or creates anything uses something in order to do that. Only God—Elohim—can make something out of nothing. Our own creativity has nothing on His! And want to know something else crazy? God didn't even need to use His hands to create—His mouth was enough. Genesis 1 says that all God had to do was speak the world into existence. Wow!

So God is not only a beyond-talented Creator, He's also capable of doing absolutely anything. In Luke 1:37, when the angel Gabriel tells Mary she will give birth to the Son of God, he adds, "Nothing will be impossible with God."

Sometimes when we're having problems—whether we're frustrated with our homework or upset that our grandparent is in the hospital or scared that our mom can't find a job—we try to fix the problems ourselves. We attempt to create our own solutions without turning to God first. But we need to first remember that Elohim, our strong Creator God, can make something out of nothing. He's done it before, and He continues to do it to this day. He can create an entire world and universe, and He can create the answers to our problems. In fact, He already knows how He's going to take us through them. So we just need to have faith that He will get us there.

All-knowing. All-powerful. Ever-present. Beyond creative. That's our God.

In His Image

Want to know something else mind-blowing? Elohim, the strong Creator God, made us in His image. He did this because He wants us to reflect Him—His goodness, His glory, His strength, His power, and His love. Genesis 1:26 tells us one of our main purposes in life: “God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’” An image is what you see in a mirror. In the morning when you go to the mirror to get ready for your day, your image flashes back at you from the mirror. It reflects you accurately.

When God made us in His image, He put us at a higher level than all the rest of His creation. He didn’t make the flowers in His image. He didn’t create the animals in His image. He didn’t set the moon and stars in the sky as His image. Only *people* were given this great and awesome privilege. Every other created thing testifies to God’s majesty, but only people mirror Him. And this is why we can have such a personal connection with our Creator.

The Bible says, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). This means that whatever God is going to do for you, He has already done. Whatever God wants you to do, He has already planned it out. Whatever you discover to be the purpose for your life, He has already purposed it.

Your job isn’t to try to figure out the map of your life—where you’re going to go, what you’re going to do, or who you’re going to be. God has already drawn the map of your life, and it’s a *good* life. And by the way, don’t freak out about this! If you really, really want to be a teacher or a scientist or a mom, there’s a good chance that God has put that desire

in your heart. This doesn't mean that things can't change, but He is never going to force you to do something if you're tuned in to Him.

You don't need to create your future. Elohim, the Creator God, has already created it. You can sleep peacefully at night because you are God's beloved and He is the Creator of all good things. Elohim can make something out of nothing. His creation is wonderful—it's beyond amazing. His is a great name because He is Elohim, the great and powerful Creator.

REMEMBER IT!

“Elohim” starts like “elephant.” An elephant is a pretty incredible creation, isn't it? Its massive size, its big floppy ears and long trunk, its powerful walk... But elephants are also loving animals—and actually pretty cute. I'm not saying that God looks like an elephant, but elephants are part of His amazing creation. And if the word “elephant” helps you think of Elohim—the strong Creator God—then go with it!

Can you think of any other ways to remember Elohim, the name God uses to remind us He is the strong Creator God? Write them down here.
