

## THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S NAMES

**N**ames *are* important. Place names often identify the historical significance of locations. For instance, you probably know that the name Philadelphia means “the city of brotherly love.” Jerusalem means “the city of peace.” Current events in these cities may not reflect the meaning of their names, but nonetheless, the names are significant when looking to the past or the future.

Likewise, people’s names can offer insight into their identity. When a newly married woman changes her surname to match the name of her husband, she’s agreeing to align herself and the very essence of her identity with the man she loves. A child who is adopted assumes a new identity by taking on the new parents’ surname as his or her own.

Today, parents often choose baby names because of their sound rather than their meaning, so a nickname is often added later that reflects the person’s character. If someone has a nickname of Slim, you can pretty much be guaranteed that this person is slender. Thus nicknames often reflect more about people than do given names.

Names are so potent that parents will avoid attaching some names to their children. For example, we don’t see anyone naming their kids Hitler or Benedict Arnold because those names represent something so negative that no one would want to associate an innocent child with it. Names do matter. In fact, they matter so much that we will often feel dishonored or disrespected if someone calls us by something other than our name or fails to pronounce our name correctly again and again.

While names do matter, it must also be said that a person can have a name and not have the quality attached to it. For example, throughout the past decade, some parents have named their sons Michael Jordan, hoping to somehow tap into his great basketball prowess. Some have named their child Bill Gates in an attempt to associate with his great wealth. It's funny, but people in Africa have sent me photos of their child, whom they've named Tony Evans! But does having that person's name really transfer anything of value?

No. A child may bear a famous person's name, but that doesn't mean the child will exhibit the qualities of that person. A boy named Michael Jordan may be clumsy and uncoordinated. Or he can be named Bill Gates and be as poor and unimaginative as can be. The name alone contains no special power. Nomenclature does not equal substance. Yet when that name *is* connected to the quality it represents, the result is powerful.

We shouldn't be surprised that, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible demonstrates the power of a name. And much of that has to do specifically with God's names. If I were to write a chapter on each and every name of God that appears in Scripture, the book would be several volumes long.

God reveals many of His names to us so we can gain several different perspectives on who He is. One name by itself can't fully represent God's majesty and power. One name alone can't fully tell us all we need to know about this person we refer to as God.

In more than four decades of ministry and six decades of life, I've become increasingly convinced that God longs for us to know Him more fully. He desires to be known for all of who He truly is. When we truly know Him, when we understand and experience the depth of His goodness and power, our hearts are open to worshipping Him.

Knowing God's names is critical to our comprehension and application of the strength and victory that come through His multidimensional nature. God wants us to come face-to-face with His significance and substance.

Yet to do so requires knowing His names. In fact, throughout the Bible, when God revealed a new aspect of His character to His people,

He often did this by revealing a new name. God has a name to meet the needs of any situation we may face in life. Whatever our present situation, God has a name that fits it.

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 knew he couldn't go to the Israelites in the authority of his own name. "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). Moses needed to know God's name. He knew God's power and authority were attached to His name.

It was at this point that God unveiled one of the great names of Scripture. "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you'" (verse 14). God, the great I AM, showed up in Egypt to bring freedom to the captives and overpower the enemies who sought to keep God's people from their destiny.

## The Key to Unlocking the Treasure

My hope is that through this book, you will be introduced to God as if for the first time—through His names. You will come to know Him in ways you haven't previously known. My hope isn't merely that you will learn how to pronounce some of His names, but rather that you will truly grasp the nature behind each one. When you identify and understand which name relates to your particular situation, you will be able to connect with God's power to deliver you in that situation.

God's name is like a key that unlocks the treasure God has in store for you. Scripture tells us, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10). His name alone is a fortified place offering freedom, security, and peace. The psalmist tells us, "He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever; holy and awesome is His name" (Psalm 111:9).

God is so awesome that He has a name for whatever you're facing. And His names communicate specific attributes or characteristics of God that can strengthen and empower you in your situation.