

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE | *Names Of God*

Do you have a name with an interesting story? Whether you were named after a person of significance, or because of the meaning of your name, or just because your parents liked it, our names have meaning to us. They represent who we are. And that can be even more true when it comes to our names for God. The Bible is full of interesting names given to God:

Jehovah Jireh – means *The Lord Will Provide*

Jehovah Rapha – means *The Lord Who Heals*

Adonai – means *Master*

El Olam – means *Our God Is Unchanging And Eternal*

El Shaday – which most English Bibles translate as *God Almighty* is literally *The God Of Many Breasts*, the idea being that God is a mother who has enough milk to nurse all her children.

God is also referred to as *Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace*.

These names were given to God by people, because of how they experienced God in their real world circumstances. It was like they named God things like, *The God who is getting us through Covid* or *Protector Of Peaceful Protestors* or *My Therapist On Speed Dial*. Of course, there are also names self-chosen by God, like “Heavenly Father” and “The Great I Am”. One of the most central self-chosen names of God in the Bible is found in the book of Exodus, where God announces their name as, ***“The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”*** (Exodus 34:6-7) Admittedly, it’s a pretty long name! But that’s almost the point. There aren’t enough words in all the languages in the world to adequately convey the fulness of who God is in a name. That’s why there are so many!

There’s something beautiful about God allowing and taking on the names we give, based on our experience. It’s so inviting and relational. I wonder what name(s) you use when you talk to God. In your prayers, do you refer to God as your *Heavenly Father* or *Mother*? Or do you prefer the name *Lord, Saviour, Creator, Friend*, or simply *Jesus*, which means *God Saves*? Do you reach for something descriptive, or something affectionate, or maybe do you just prefer the bigness of the name *God*.

We’re going to take a couple of minutes right now, and just give some quiet space, for you to personally consider: what is a name, or a few names for God that you would feel personally connected to? It could be one of the many I’ve mentioned. It could be something you make up right now on the spot. But can you think of a name for God that helps you articulate your experience of that Presence in a personal and powerful way? Let’s all take a quiet minute.

I hope maybe that was an expanding or even a moving experience for you. This week, whenever you pray, I encourage you to intentionally speak to God using this name. Or why not

use many of these names to just keep expanding your sense of the wonder, mystery, bigness, and beauty of God.

Right now as the band teaches us a new song, called "1,000 Names", I want to invite you to hold your name for God in your heart, and let it help your worship to become even more personal.