

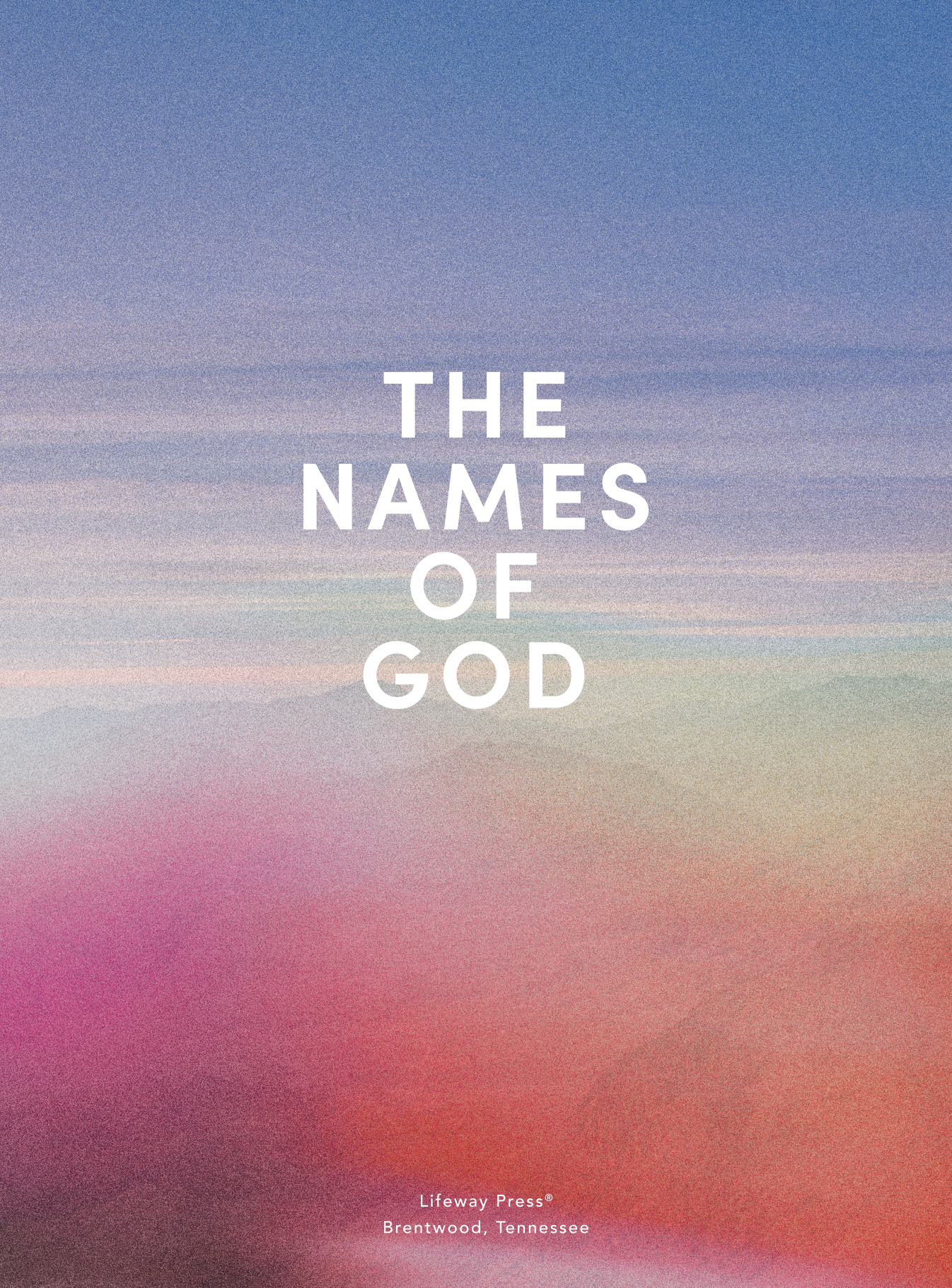
8-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

A Study on **Who God Is** and Who He **Calls Us to Be**

VIDEO  
ACCESS  
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# THE NAMES OF GOD

KRISTI MCLELLAND  
CAROLINE SAUNDERS  
BLAIR LINNE  
JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD  
KELLY MINTER  
ELIZABETH WOODSON



# THE NAMES OF GOD

Lifeway Press®  
Brentwood, Tennessee

Published by Lifeway Press® • ©2026 Kristi McLelland, Caroline Saunders, Blair Linne, Jennifer Rothschild, Kelly Minter, Elizabeth Woodson

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ISBN: 979-8-3845-2446-5 • Item: 005851521

Dewey decimal classification: 231

SUBHD: GOD \ TRINITY \ GOD--NAMES

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*Printed in Dongguan, China*

Lifeway Women Bible Studies  
Lifeway Resources  
200 Powell Place, Suite 100  
Brentwood, TN 37027-7707

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## ABOUT THE

# Authors



**KRISTI McLELLAND** is a speaker, teacher, and college professor. Since completing her Master of Arts in Christian Education at Dallas Theological Seminary, she has dedicated her life to discipleship, to teaching people how to study the Bible for themselves, and to writing about how God is better than we ever knew by explaining the Bible through a Middle Eastern lens. Her previous Bible studies include *Luke in the Land*, *The Gospel on the Ground*, and *Jesus and Women*.



**CAROLINE SAUNDERS** is a writer, pastor's wife, and mother of three who believes in taking Jesus seriously and being un-serious about nearly everything else. She loves serving women through writing, through her church, and through Story & Soul Weekend, a women's retreat she started with her dear friends (StoryandSoulWeekend.com). She is the author of *Come Home*, *The Story of Home*, *The Story of Water*, and the teens' Bible study, *Better Than Life*.



**BLAIR LINNE** is a Christian spoken word artist, actress, author, and Bible teacher. Blair is recognized as one of the originators of the Christian spoken word genre. At thirteen, she was one of the youngest contributors to the Anansi Writers Workshop at L.A.'s prestigious art forum, The World Stage. Since then, she has toured globally, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through spoken word.



**JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD** has shared her inspiring messages to audiences across the country and is the author of many books and Bible studies, including *Heaven*, *Amos*, *Take Courage*, *Psalm 23*, and more. She's been blind since age fifteen and says the greatest lesson she's learned in the dark is that it doesn't have to be well with your circumstances to be well with your soul. Jennifer is a boy mom who lives in Missouri with her husband, whom she affectionately calls her very own Dr. Phil.



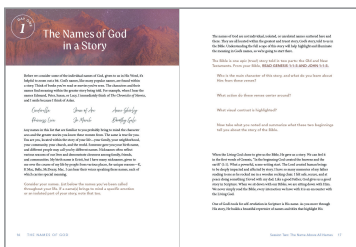
**KELLY MINTER** is a Bible teacher, author, and singer-songwriter with a desire to serve women of all ages. She is the author of *The Blessed Life* as well as several Bible studies, including *Esther*, *Ruth*, *Encountering God*, and *Finding God Faithful*. Kelly has found deep hope and healing through the Bible's truths, making her message personal and relational. She also partners with Justice & Mercy International, an organization that cares for the vulnerable and forgotten in the Amazon and Moldova.



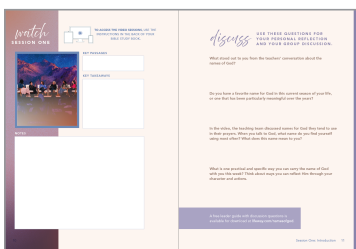
**ELIZABETH WOODSON** is a Bible teacher, author, and Founder of The Woodson Institute, an organization that equips believers to understand and grow in their Christian faith. She loves helping people internalize their faith and connect it practically to everyday life. Elizabeth is the author of *Live Free*, *From Beginning to Forever*, *Habits of Resistance*, and *Embrace Your Life*. She is also a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary with a Masters in Christian Education and the host of the podcast *Starting Place*.



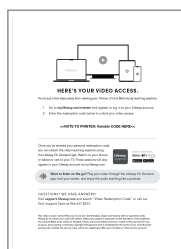
# WHAT'S *Inside*



**PERSONAL STUDY:** Each session, you'll have five days of personal study with questions to help you process and apply what you read. After you finish a session of personal study, it's time to watch the teaching video. *Note: There is no personal study for Session 1.*



**WATCH & DISCUSS:** These pages provide a place to take notes from the video teachings and reflection questions to discuss with your group. Begin your study with the Session One video and then watch the rest of the videos after you finish each session of personal study.



**VIDEO ACCESS:** With the purchase of this book, you have access to teaching videos that provide content to help you better understand and apply what you have studied in the previous session. **You'll find detailed information for how to access the teaching videos on the card inserted in the back of your Bible study book.**

## A NOTE ABOUT BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

This study will primarily use the Christian Standard Bible translation (CSB). However, reading the same passage of Scripture from more than one translation is a helpful study tool, and we'll incorporate several translations in the pages of this book and in the videos. Here are a few of the others we'll use, which will be marked by their abbreviations:

- English Standard Version (ESV)
- New American Standard Bible (NASB)
- New International Version (NIV)
- New Living Translation (NLT)

You can find all of these translations on a Bible app or websites such as biblegateway.com or biblehub.com.

## LEADING A GROUP?

A free leader guide PDF is available for download at [lifeway.com/namesofgod](http://lifeway.com/namesofgod). The leader guide offers several tips, along with discussion guides for each session.



# Introduction

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LAURA MAGNESS

The written Word of God, the Bible, is more than just a book, and an ancient one at that. From the beginning of creation, God has used words as both a way He acts—speaking things into existence—and a way He makes Himself known to His creation. And this is what the Bible is: God’s own words to us that tell us about His character, His plans, and His unfathomable love for us.

From Genesis to Revelation, one of the primary ways God makes Himself known is through His names (more than two hundred of them by some estimates). Each one unveils glimpses of God’s character and His actions toward His people. In the Old Testament, we learn He is *Elohim*, the powerful Creator who spoke the universe into existence. He is *El-roi*, the God who sees us and cares for us. He is *Yahweh Yireh*, our provider. Then, in the New Testament, we learn that He is *Jesus*, which means “Yahweh Is Salvation.” He is *Immanuel*, God With Us. He is the *Spirit*, Comforter and Counselor, dwelling within us to guide and empower.

This is just a glimpse of the life-changing journey we’re about to take in this study. God’s names tell a grand story of who He is—Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer—and draw us into a deeper relationship with Him. As we study these names, we will discover not only what they mean but how they deepen our trust, shape our worship, and transform our daily walk with Him. To get started, watch the Session One video, which will introduce you to the teaching team and give you an idea of what to expect from the study. Note-taking space is provided on the next page.

---

## MEMORY VERSE

*LORD, our Lord, how magnificent is  
your name throughout the earth!*

Psalm 8:1a

# watch

## SESSION ONE



**TO ACCESS THE VIDEO SESSIONS,**  
USE THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE  
BACK OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY BOOK.



### KEY PASSAGES

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

### NOTES

# discuss

*Use these questions for your personal reflection and your group discussion.*

What stood out to you from the teachers' conversation about the names of God?

Do you have a favorite name for God in this current season of your life, or one that has been particularly meaningful over the years?

In the video, the teaching team discussed names for God they tend to use in their prayers. When you talk to God, what name do you find yourself using most often? What does this name mean to you?

What is one practical and specific way you can carry the name of God with you this week? Think about ways you can reflect Him through your character and actions.

A free leader guide with discussion questions is available for download at [lifeway.com/namesofgod](https://lifeway.com/namesofgod).

יְהוָה

YAHWEH

ELOHIM

אֱלֹהִים

Ἀββᾶ

ABBA

יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

YAHWEH SABAOTH

IMMANUEL


עִמָּנוּאֵל

παράκλητος

PARACLETE

Ἄλφα καὶ Ω

ALPHA AND OMEGA



# The Name Above All Names

---

KRISTI McLELLAND

**W**elcome to Session Two of our study on the names of God. A rich and meaningful biblical feast is set before us as we fix our eyes and hearts on some of the many names of God mentioned throughout Scripture. My prayer is that this will be deeply beneficial, healing, and transformative for you, as it has been for me.

As I write this, I'm living in one of the hardest seasons of my entire life. Never before have I written or taught anything from this kind of pain; it's deep, primal, life-altering, and disorienting. Five months ago, I had to put my beloved dog, Chester, down, but that was only the beginning of loss for me this year. My mother passed away eight days ago. We hosted her celebration of life service five days ago. Grief is upon me like a heavy, wet blanket. I feel profoundly sad. My mind is jumbled. I am undone, and I know my life on this earth will never be the same. With deep grief in my heart, I am on the hunt for hope. I need to stare at God in all His various names right now.

French philosopher Blaise Pascal once wrote, "In difficult times, carry something beautiful in your heart."<sup>1</sup> The names of God are beautiful, and whether this is a difficult time for you or not, this study is an invitation for you to shift your gaze to the Living God who holds it all in His hands. Come to this biblical table and study as you are, not as you think you ought to be. The names of God will be like oil and salve on your heart. With this being said, let's go hunt for hope together.

---

### MEMORY VERSE

*The name of the LORD is a strong tower;  
the righteous run to it and are protected.*

Proverbs 18:10

# The Names of God in a Story

Before we consider some of the individual names of God, given to us in His Word, it's helpful to zoom out a bit. God's names, like many popular names, are found within a story. Think of books you've read or movies you've seen. The characters and their names find meaning within the greater story being told. For example, when I hear the names Edmund, Peter, Susan, or Lucy, I immediately think of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and I smile because I think of Aslan.

*Cinderella*

*Joan of Arc*

*Anne Shirley*

*Princess Leia*

*Jo March*

*Dorothy Gale*

Any names in this list that are familiar to you probably bring to mind the character arcs and the greater stories you know these women from. The same is true for you. You are *you*, located within the story of your life—your family, your neighborhood, your community, your church, and the world. Someone gave you your birth name, and different people may call you by different names. Nicknames often reflect various seasons of our lives and demonstrate closeness among family, friends, and communities. My birth name is Kristi, but I have many nicknames, given to me over the course of my life by people from various places, for unique reasons—K, K Mac, Belle, McDeezy, Mac. I can hear their voices speaking these names, each of which carries special meaning.

**Consider your names. List below the names you've been called throughout your life. If a name(s) brings to mind a specific emotion or an isolated part of your story, note that too.**

The names of God are not individual, isolated, or unrelated names scattered here and there. They are all located within the greatest and truest story, God's story, told to us in the Bible. Understanding the full scope of this story will help highlight and illuminate the meaning in God's names, so we're going to start there.

**The Bible is one epic (true!) story told in two parts: the Old and New Testaments. From your Bible, READ GENESIS 1:1-5 AND JOHN 1:1-5.**

**Who is the main character of this story, and what do you learn about Him from these verses?**

**What action do these verses center around?**

**What visual contrast is highlighted?**

**Now take what you noted and summarize what these two beginnings tell you about the story of the Bible.**

When the Living God chose to give us the Bible, He gave us a story. We can feel it in the first words of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1). What a powerful, scene-setting start. The Lord created human beings to be deeply impacted and affected by story. I have so many memories of my father reading to me as he rocked me in a wooden rocking chair. I felt safe, secure, and at peace doing something I loved with my dad. Like a good Father, God gives us a good story in Scripture. When we sit down with our Bibles, we are sitting down with Him. We never simply read the Bible; every interaction we have with it is an encounter with the Living God.

One of God's tools for self-revelation in Scripture is His name. As you move through His story, He builds a beautiful repertoire of names and titles that highlight His

character (who He is) and His actions (how He works in His world). One writer puts it this way,

In God’s case, there is an especially close relationship between His name and His nature. By revealing His name, God reveals who He is, allowing us access to Him and placing Himself within the reach of our prayers. Scripture tells us we can call on the name of the Lord and even take refuge in His name.<sup>2</sup>

While much of our study will focus on what individual names teach us about the Lord, first I want you to consider this general directive we see time and again in the Bible to “call on the name of the LORD.” God wants you to know Him. That self-revelation is at the heart of His Word, and it is a beautiful invitation into deeper relationship with Him.

**Read over the following verses. You’ll notice some common themes. On the line next to each verse, write one word that describes the way people then (and today) are to interact with God’s name.**

*A son was born to Seth also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD. Genesis 4:26*

---

*Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name. Exodus 20:7*

---

*For I will proclaim the LORD’s name. Declare the greatness of our God! Deuteronomy 32:3*

---

*Those who know your name trust in you because you have not abandoned those who seek you, LORD. Psalm 9:10*

*But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name. John 1:12*

*Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Acts 2:21*

*For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11*

*Therefore, through him let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Hebrews 13:15*

God's name is synonymous with His glory and His reputation, and His story links knowing His name with trusting Him, having a personal relationship with Him, and worshiping Him. For the rest of this session, we're going to sit in this story so that it becomes the framework by which we can understand the various names we'll encounter over the next six sessions.

On page 214 you'll find a page set aside for you to keep a running list of the names of God you come across in this study, along with what each name reveals to you about our Lord. Use this to broaden your understanding of who the Lord reveals Himself to be in His story and to strengthen your trust in—and commitment to—Him.

*Do you have a name of God you're clinging to more than others at this time in your life? What about a name you gravitate toward when you pray? With these names in mind, call on Him now.*

# The Story of the Bible

## PART 1

Yesterday, we established how the names of God are found within the story of the Bible, a story that reveals who God is and invites us into relationship with Him. Over the next three days, we'll examine the narrative arc of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Then, for the rest of our study, we'll consider names of God as they show up throughout the story.

When I teach the story of Scripture, I describe it in three parts: shalom (Gen. 1–2), shalom shattered (Gen. 3–Rev. 20), and shalom restored (Rev. 21–22). I like to use this illustration to help us visualize these three parts. Add the name of the part under each of the chapter sections on this story graph.



The Bible has 1,189 chapters. In four of those chapters, everything is as it should be—God's perfect design. But the other 1,185 of them? That's the part of the story we'll get to tomorrow.

### SHALOM (GENESIS 1–2)

**READ THROUGH GENESIS 1–2.** I recommend reading it aloud to help you capture the full scope of the start to God's story.

The Bible begins with not one but two creation stories. These are not different stories, but the same beautiful story told from two different vantage points. Genesis 1 tells the story of creation from a *transcendent* view, or big picture. Genesis 2 moves in much closer to give us an *immanent* view, or a close-up picture.

Genesis 1 begins with God creating everything. Over and over, the Living God speaks and things are created. The Hebrew word *davar* means both “word” and “thing.” The Lord spoke words (*dvarim*) and they became things (*dvarim*). What was this creation like?

**To describe God’s creative work, the biblical author uses one word seven times in Genesis 1. Look at verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31. What is that word? Doodle it here:**

When the Bible repeats a word, we are meant to pay attention. Seven times the Hebrew word *tov*, meaning “good,” is used to describe creation. The creation narrative quickly takes on a rhythmic tone—the Living God created, and it was *tov*—it was good. Good, upon good, upon good, upon good. Deep goodness. Thorough goodness. Vast goodness. Goodness everywhere, all around.



Shalom is the way things ought to be.

Toward the end of Genesis 1, the Living God creates humanity—male and female. We are unique among all of creation because we alone are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27).



**Reread Genesis 1:26-32. What two-word phrase does God use to affirm His creation in verse 31? Doodle it here.**

I love how Genesis 1:31 says, “and it was very good indeed.” In the Hebrew, this is *tov meod*, very good. This “very good” creation of humanity seems to be the crescendo of creation. Following this, God rested on the seventh day.

**Now flip over to Genesis 2, the more intimate, up close view of creation. How does GENESIS 2:7 describe the creation of man?**

In the transcendent view of creation detailed in Genesis 1, God created with His words. In the immanent view in Genesis 2, God created with His hands. “Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7).

Next, we are introduced to the most famous and most longed for garden in the world. “The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east” (Gen. 2:8a). In ancient Near Eastern cultures, kings had gardens associated with their royal residences. You may be familiar with the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Here in Genesis 2, the Hebrew word for *garden* is *gan*, and we get a picture of an intentionally cultivated, well-tended, beautiful garden fit for a King.

The Hebrew word *eden* means *delight, pleasure, or luxury*. Eden was a delightful and luxurious garden, in part because it had an abundance of water. In the ancient Near East and the modern Middle East, water is vital. You will not survive for long without it in the hot and dry climates. The Bible says that a river from Eden watered the garden, and from *Gan-Eden* it divided and sourced not one, not two, not three, but four rivers. Eden was the ideal ancient Near Eastern picture of delight, pleasure, and luxury because she was well-watered, so much so that she watered everything around her. There was more than enough, the opposite of scarcity.

Gan-Eden was a royal garden manicured for a King. It was lovely and well-watered. And it was here that God not only placed the man He had created, but it was also *in* Eden that He formed the woman.

**What imagery comes into your mind when you think of the garden of Eden? What do you imagine it looked like? What might one have felt standing in the middle of it?**

**God used the word “good.” What one word would you choose to describe Eden?**

You already know the word I would choose to describe creation and the garden of Eden: shalom. At its most basic definition, the Hebrew word *shalom* translates to peace, but this is a word that means so much more. Shalom can also mean universal flourishing, delight, wholeness, and harmony. When everything is working together in fullness, goodness, generosity, and unity, peace is the result. The story of the Bible begins with everything in this state of divine shalom. Can you imagine a world in which everything just worked like it was supposed to? A world where there was sufficiency, enough, more than enough? A world without scarcity?

Shalom is the way things ought to be; it’s the way things were meant to be forever and ever. Shalom for all creation and humanity was the Living God’s plan from the very beginning; literally, from the genesis.

When God created in Genesis 1–2, He created things that were tov (good), tov meod (very good), and full of shalom. The story of the Bible has a very good beginning. We read Genesis 1–2 and we breathe deep. We long for Eden and the delight of the garden. We long for a world anchored in shalom. We also sigh. We sigh because we know we have somehow lost Eden. The good and very good shalom-rich creation of Genesis 1–2 often seems far away. What happened? That’s for tomorrow.

■ *Close by reading Psalm 19 as a prayer of praise to our Creator God.*

# The Story of the Bible

## PART 2

The names of God are found within the story of the Bible, and today we continue tracking and tracing the narrative of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. This will help us better understand the names of God, as well as why they appear where they do throughout the Bible. Yesterday, we looked at the first part of the story: shalom (Gen. 1–2). Today we will explore the second part of the story: shalom shattered.

### SHALOM SHATTERED (GENESIS 3—REVELATION 20)

The heart of the Living God for His creation is seen in what He created—everything in a state of shalom. Genesis 1–2 shows us how things ought to be, how things were meant to be. Eden was the original home for humanity, beginning with Adam and Eve. Gan-Eden was a delightful, flourishing, well-watered, cultivated, beautiful garden, fit for a King and His people to enjoy together. This was the Living God’s idea, His plan from the beginning. But the storyline continues in Genesis 3, where that shalom is shattered.

**READ GENESIS 3:1-7 NOW.** Keep in mind the feelings of Eden you captured as you read Genesis 1–2 yesterday. What one word would you use to describe Eden now?

In Genesis 1, we feel the rhythmic beauty of creation as the Living God created, and it was tov (good)—over and over and over again like a beautiful song on repeat. We feel the crescendo of the creation song with the tov meod (very good) creation of humanity, male and female. At the end of Genesis 2, all is well. One verse captures this deep, rich and meaningful shalom: “Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame” (v. 25).

**REREAD GENESIS 3:6-7 BELOW.** In your own words, and with the help of Genesis 2:25, what was the immediate consequence of sin?

*The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.*

Genesis 3:6-7

The record scratches. Suddenly, the goodness is marred; something goes terribly wrong. An errant note is played in the harmony of creation. The flow of shalom in all things and between all things is fractured, and shame slithers its way in.

## SHALOM AND SIN

Throughout the story of the Bible, sin is the opposite of shalom. I would go so far as to say sin can be defined as anything that shatters or breaks God's shalom. Think of it as the anti-shalom. We feel the gravity of this when our own shalom is broken, when our peace gives way to shame and guilt because of the reality of sin in our lives.

**The following are characteristics of Hebraic shalom. For each one, write a word or phrase that could describe its opposite.**

Universal flourishing vs. \_\_\_\_\_

Wholeness vs. \_\_\_\_\_

Harmony vs. \_\_\_\_\_

Delight vs. \_\_\_\_\_

Sufficiency vs. \_\_\_\_\_

In the story of the Bible, shalom was shattered when Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At this point in the story, a new word is introduced: the Hebrew word *ra*, which means “evil.”

Evil has many faces and characteristics. One of the first effects we see of shalom being shattered in the biblical narrative is how quickly evil’s impact spreads and expands. It moves like lightning, growing like cancer.

In Genesis 3, Eve sees something she wants, takes it, eats it, and shares it. (Mark those verbs in Gen. 3:6-7 on the previous page.) In Genesis 4, God warns Cain that “sin is crouching at the door” before Cain kills Abel (4:6). A couple chapters later, in Genesis 6, the world has become so full of evil (*ra*) and violence (anti-shalom) that the Living God floods the earth in an act of uncreation.

**It is important for us to pause here and ask, *Why does God hate sin? How would you answer this question? What insight do the first three chapters of Genesis hold?***

When we look at sin as anti-shalom or anything that violates shalom, we begin to see the heart of God as we engage with the rest of the story of the Bible. God doesn’t hate sin simply because we broke a rule or a commandment. God hates sin because sin breaks us.

Sin is the missing of a target, a wandering from the path, a straying from the fold. Sin is a hard heart and a stiff neck. Sin is blindness and deafness. It is both the overstepping of a line and the failure to reach it—both transgression and shortcoming. Sin is disruption of created harmony and then resistance to divine restoration of that harmony. . . . God hates sin not just because it violates his law but, more substantively, because it violates shalom, because it breaks the peace, because it interferes with the way things are supposed to be. God is for shalom and therefore against sin.<sup>3</sup>

You and I were born into this world of shattered shalom. Things are not as they ought to be, as they were meant to be from the genesis. Remember, there are 1,189 chapters in the story of the Bible, and the world is broken for 1,185 of them.

The story of the Bible—and our stories—don't end in a Genesis 3 world. Tomorrow we will pick up the storyline and continue forward. What will be the Living God's response to sin entering the story? What will the Living God do about the problem, presence, and power of sin disturbing shalom in the world?

I want to leave you today with a gospel-gorgeous hint. In the very moments that shalom was shattered, hope was embedded in the plot:

*The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then **the eyes of both of them were opened**, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.*

Genesis 3:6-7 (emphasis added)

The phrase, “their eyes were opened,” appears at another critical turning point in God's story.

*Finish your study time today by reading Luke 24:13-35 from a posture of prayer and worship. Here is your gospel-gorgeous hint that shalom will be restored.*



# The Story of the Bible

## PART 3

Remember, the names of God are found within the story of the Bible, and soon we will see some of these names within their beautiful, brilliant positioning and placement throughout the Bible. By way of review, for the past few days we've been looking at the bigger story of the Bible, understood in three parts: shalom (Gen. 1–2), shalom shattered (Gen. 3–Rev. 20), and shalom restored (Rev. 21–22).

Yesterday, we looked at the second part of the story: shalom shattered. Today, we will look at the third and final part of the story: shalom restored. This part of the story can be described with a Hebrew term we are now familiar with: tov meod. Shalom restored is very, very good indeed.

### **SHALOM RESTORED (REVELATION 21–22)**

In Genesis 1–2, the Living God created everything to be in a forever state of shalom: universal flourishing, wholeness, harmony, sufficiency, and delight. Over and over we read that creation was tov (good). The creation of humanity, male and female, was tov meod (very good).

In Genesis 3, shalom was shattered. The intended forever shalom was vandalized, marred, distorted, fractured. Creation fell into shadow. This shattering spread like a virus, moving fast and wreaking havoc. In four brief chapters, from Genesis 3 to Genesis 6, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, Cain killed his brother, and the world became so violent that the Living God felt the need to flood, or de-create, it. This tov and tov meod creation quickly became a world of ra (evil). What will the Living God do with this mess? Is there hope for the rest of the story of the Bible?

Skip to the end of your Bible and **READ REVELATION 21–22**. As you read the final two chapters of the Bible, look for language and details reminiscent of the creation account in Genesis 1–2, and more specifically the garden of Eden. Write down anything you notice.

*A deep and profound restoration of shalom is already underway.* This is the story told in Scripture—it’s the trajectory of God’s work and the goal of His self-revelation. Everything we will learn about God in this study moves us toward Revelation 22. We’ll come back to the end in Session Eight, but I want you to keep this restoration work at the forefront of your mind as you study.

Now, with that foundation, here come the names of God!

## **GOD IS VERBING**

The first name of God shows up just four words into the story: “In the beginning God . . .” (Gen. 1:1). “God” here is the Hebrew *Elohim*. According to one scholar, “Elohim is plural in Hebrew and is sometimes translated ‘gods,’ though it is often used to name the one God of Israel.”<sup>4</sup> (More on that next session.)

The fifth word in the story of the Bible describes what God does: “In the beginning God *created* . . .” (emphasis added). The first name of God is followed by a verb: created. This *name* followed by a *verb* is central to understanding the names of God throughout the Bible.

In the ancient world, names carried more significance than they do in our world today. Your name was your essential essence and character. Your name was your destiny, connected to what you would do in the world. In other words, your name was your verb. Names in the ancient world conveyed action, motion, and movement. When we see a name of God throughout the Bible, our first question should always be, “What is God doing?” Another scholar writes, “to encounter the words of Scripture is to encounter God in action.”<sup>5</sup>

In Hebrew, the first sentence of the Bible contains seven words, aptly titled the “sacred seven.” Here is how it reads. Before you read it, it’s important to know that each line of Hebrew text reads from right to left.



בְּרֵאשִׁית | בְּרָא | אֱלֹהִים | אֶת | הַשָּׁמַיִם | וְאֶת | הָאָרֶץ:

*the earth | and | the heavens | [et – object marker in Hebrew] | God | created | In the beginning*

**Circle God’s name, *Elohim*, the third Hebrew word from the right. Try writing it, too! (See the sidebar on page 43 to check your work!)**

Throughout the biblical narrative, the number seven represents shalom. Even here in the first sentence of the Bible, we are being introduced to the God who creates everything “in seven,” or in shalom. These seven Hebrew words in the first sentence of the Bible are followed by seven days of creation.<sup>6</sup>

### **LOOK AT GENESIS 2:4. What new name for God is used in this verse?**

The “LORD God” here is *Yahweh Elohim* in Hebrew. Tomorrow we’ll unpack this divine name, but for today it’s important to note that the addition of *Yahweh* makes God’s name more personal. God’s names match the shift from big picture to more personal that occurs as you read through Genesis 1–2. Amazingly, this personal name—LORD God—continues into Genesis 3. The transcendent God (*Elohim*) of creation has come so close, so immanently near, that He is walking *in* His creation, *in* the garden of Eden, looking for Adam and Eve. He did not come near with rules or commandments, but with a question: “Where are you?” (3:9).

Why was God looking for Adam and Eve? The Living God was about to *verb*. He was about to move, to work, to act. He started by covering their nakedness.

**LOOK AT GENESIS 3:8-12, AND VERSE 21.** List out all the verbs of things God did in these verses. What do His actions tell you about Him?

When shalom was shattered, God began the deep, restorative work of repairing the breach. A few verses later, in Genesis 3:15, God says, “I will put hostility between you [Satan] and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” When God meets Adam and Eve in their shame, He presents them with the consequences of their sin. But He also presents them with the promise of salvation and redemption, the restoration of shalom.

**READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-22.** In these verses, Paul clearly articulates God’s plan for restoration, which we find ourselves in the midst of today. Summarize this passage in your own words, paying attention to the role Jesus plays in it.

✱  
The Living God  
is turning things  
right side up  
again.



The story of the Bible is the ongoing story of the Living God restoring, repairing, renewing, and redeeming shalom for humanity and the world through the death and resurrection of Jesus. He is making crooked things straight. He is making rough places smooth. Sin turned things upside down, but the Living God is turning things right side up again.

The names of God we encounter throughout the Bible mark these stories, moments, and actions of the one true God who is restoring shalom. As we learn more about some of His specific names, over and over again we will see the Living God intentionally at work.

We ended yesterday’s session with a gospel-gorgeous hint. In the very moment when shalom was shattered, a phrase was used: “then the eyes of both of them were opened” (3:7a). In that moment, Adam and Eve’s eyes were opened to shame and death. This phrase would be echoed later in the story of the Bible on the most significant day in human history.

**REREAD LUKE 24:13-35**, which you read at the close of yesterday's study. What do you learn about the story God is writing from this passage (vv. 25-27)?

**What role does Jesus play in that story?**

Thousands of years later, Jesus, the Son of God, would resurrect in the borrowed tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Jesus, the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15, defeated sin, shame, and death, and then He walked out of the tomb located just outside the city walls of Jerusalem. On that very day, on resurrection day, Jesus walked on the road to Emmaus with two of His disciples. Later that resurrection night, the two shared a meal with Jesus; they ate together. In a line so beautiful it makes me cry, we read this echo:

*“It was as he reclined at the table with them that he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. **Then their eyes were opened**, and they recognized him . . . ”*

Luke 24:30-31a, emphasis added

Their eyes were opened to recognize the resurrected Jesus and everything He accomplished through His life, death, and resurrection. Their eyes were opened to sin, shame, death, and hell *defeated*. Their eyes were opened to shalom being restored with the hopefulness of forever.

Our stories do not end in shattered shalom. God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are even now continuing the work of restoring shalom. They are re-Eden-ing the world. The Bible does not end in Genesis 3 or in Revelation 20. By the grace of God, there's also Revelation 21–22. The story of the Bible ends with shalom restored.

*Reflect on the restorative work God is doing even now in your life through your relationship with Jesus. Take a moment to say a prayer of gratitude to Him today.*

# Yahweh

## COVENANT NAME IN SACRED TEXT

The names of God are found within the story of the Bible. For the rest of our study, we'll zoom in and out of parts of that story as we get to know our Lord more. We would be remiss, though, to go any further without considering one name that rises above the rest: *Yahweh*, the divine name, the name God gave Himself. Of all the names we'll study, this is the most personal, sacred name and the foundation upon which the other names are built.

The name Yahweh is referred to as the Tetragrammaton (which means “four letters” in Greek) because it is formed by the four Hebrew consonants Y-H-W-H. This name of God is found more than six thousand five hundred times in the Old Testament—you'll recognize it when you see the all-caps LORD. We saw it yesterday in Genesis 3:8, when God was walking in the garden, but He officially revealed this name to Moses in an encounter we read about in Exodus 3. (You'll have to forgive me for jumping ahead a bit in God's story. We'll come back to Genesis next session!)

### I AM WHO I AM

**READ EXODUS 3:1-15.** If this story is familiar to you, do your best to read it with fresh eyes. Write down at least three observations you have as you read.

The Living God introduced Himself to Moses using the sacred, personal name Yahweh in Exodus 3:14-15:

*God replied 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 this*

*to the Israelites: The LORD [Yahweh], the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered in every generation.”*

**What does “I AM” communicate about the character and work of God? Consider: Where is the verb in this name? What does the verb indicate God is doing? What does that tell you about God? Do your best to answer before reading further.**

While we can't know God's thoughts, context and biblical scholarship give us some insight into what He meant when He told Moses to call Him “I AM.” Scholars have understood this name as communicating:

(1) that God is self-existent and therefore not dependent on anything else for his own existence; (2) that God is the creator and sustainer of all that exists; (3) that God is immutable in his being and character and thus is not in the process of becoming something different from what he is (e.g., “the same yesterday and today and forever,” Heb. 13:8); and (4) that God is eternal in his existence. While each of these points is true of God, the main focus in this passage is on the Lord's promise to be with Moses and his people . . . [T]he name of Yahweh (“the LORD”) is also a clear reminder of God's promises to his people and of his help for them to fulfill their calling.<sup>7</sup>

**God is “I AM” to you today, just like He was to Moses and the Israelites then. Reflect on how this truth about who God is informs your relationship with Him.**

One of our goals for this study is to leave you with a more robust understanding of who God is and how He works. We want you to walk away from this study knowing what God's names mean and the implications they have on your relationship with Him. Deeper knowledge of God leads to greater worship of Him. With each name we

introduce, we've included a feature that defines the name, tells you how to pronounce it, shows it for you in the original language—Hebrew or Greek—and challenges you to trace it. May this glimpse at God's name in its original language draw your heart even closer to Him.

## THE TORAH SCROLL

While we often think of reading the Bible, I prefer to say that we *interact* with it; it is living and active and so are we (Heb. 4:12). I enjoy visiting a messianic Jewish community near my home, sometimes attending their Shabbat services. While visiting one Saturday morning, the rabbi told me the story of their congregational Torah scroll. *The Torah* is the first five books of the Christian Old Testament—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—and it is known to Jews as the Hebrew Bible. Jewish traditions and practices inform how the scrolls of Scripture are to be handled because they contain the sacred, personal name of God.

This sacred Torah scroll is kept in an “ark”—a beautiful wooden case situated at the back center of the stage—and clothed with a gorgeous covering or jacket to both protect and honor it. During the service, the Torah scroll is taken out of the ark and processed through the congregation as they sing, clap, and welcome the Word of the Lord among them. I get chills of joy every time I experience this celebration of the Word in our midst. It is an incredibly beautiful experience. The procession and celebration of the Torah scroll is followed by a public reading from the Torah (and other passages). After the reading, the Torah scroll is rolled up, clothed in its jacket, and returned to the ark.

יהוה

YAHWEH,  
or YHWH

## The Divine Name

Pronunciation:  
YAH-weh<sup>8</sup>  
(alternate: Jehovah)

## TRACE THE NAME

יהוה

The rabbi of this local messianic Jewish community went on to tell me that their congregation considers one generation to be forty years. The number forty in the Bible signifies change. (Anytime you see “40,” look for the change that takes place.) For example:

How many days was the great flood (see Gen. 7:4,17)? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years did the Israelites spend in the wilderness before inheriting the promised land (see Deut. 1:3; Josh. 5:6)? \_\_\_\_\_

How many days and nights did Jesus spend fasting and praying in the wilderness (see Matt. 4:1-2)? \_\_\_\_\_



The Ben-Ezra Synagogue, also known as the El-Geniza Synagogue, is located in Cairo, Egypt. When the genizah/storeroom of this synagogue was discovered, tens of thousands of items, known as the “Cairo Geniza,” were found. This included sacred, nonreligious, and cultural manuscripts and fragments written in Aramaic, Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic, and more.

Every fortieth year, this local messianic community takes up donations to acquire a new congregational Torah scroll. It’s symbolic of each generation taking responsibility to bring the Word of God into the sacred assembly for their generation. Their current Torah scroll can be sent to another synagogue or congregation to serve as their next generational scroll, but it can never be thrown away *because it contains the sacred, personal name of God*. If the Torah scroll is to be retired from use, it should be honorably buried in a *genizah* (see sidebar).

But the story doesn’t end here. Scrolls that have been buried or placed in genizahs can be resurrected! A congregation can choose to resurrect an older scroll and pay to have it restored for current use in their synagogue. What a beautiful picture of the living and active power of God’s Word! This congregation’s current Torah scroll was a five hundred year-old scroll that had been buried in Iran. They resurrected it, restored it, and have used it in their congregation for a few decades.

I was so wonderfully stunned when I learned this, and I felt a fire in my chest as the rabbi was telling me all about their Torah scroll. I knew that I wanted to somehow enter into this beautiful tradition of having my own Torah scroll. I reached out to the Tennessee Bible Museum and asked if they could help locate a Torah scroll for me to purchase. They found one,

which I now own! My Torah scroll sits in my office, in a special place. I look at it often and am reminded that the sacred, personal name of God is scribed throughout that scroll. I want to serve the Living God in my generation, and I want the Scriptures to be honored and celebrated in my life.



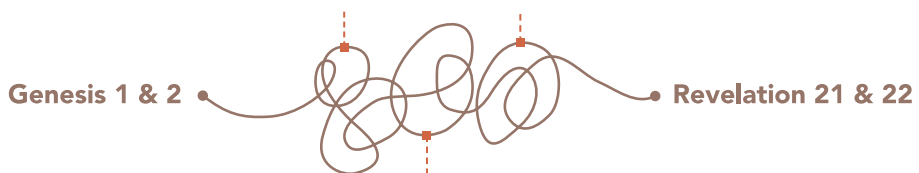
I share this story to highlight how centuries upon centuries of Jews and Christians have considered Yahweh to be God's deeply personal—and therefore deeply sacred—name. This name is a reminder for us that in as much as God is our Healer, Father, Counselor (and all the other names we will discover over the coming weeks), He is also the infinite, transcendent, holy God of the universe. And you are His.



## LIVING THE NAME

Earlier in this session of study, we discussed how the names of God communicate the way He is at work—verbing—among His creation. Similarly, as we grow in understanding of who God is, we are transformed into women who carry these names with us—who live and love in ways that reflect God's character to those around us. Throughout this study, you'll be challenged to live the name in unique ways.

**We've seen an overview of God's story this session; now consider your story. Pick a few stories from your life that represent different ways God has revealed Himself to you. For each one, pick a verb and mark it on the story graphic below. How has God been at work in your life? What verb is He using on you today?**



*Praise God for the living and active Word—this sacred text that reveals everything He wants you to know about who He is and who He calls you to be.*

# watch

## SESSION TWO



TO ACCESS THE VIDEO SESSIONS,  
USE THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE  
BACK OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY BOOK.



### KEY PASSAGES

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

### NOTES

# discuss

*Use these questions for your personal reflection and your group discussion.*

Review the name of God you studied this week—Yahweh, I AM. What is one thing God taught you about Himself through the Scripture you read and the information you learned about His name?

In one or two sentences, summarize what this name reveals about how God is at work in the world.

Share your responses to the reflection question on page 34: God is “I AM” to you today, just like He was to Moses and the Israelites then. Reflect on how this truth about who God is impacts your relationship with Him.

One of the points Kristi makes in the video teaching is that in ancient Israel, names were often associated with actions or destiny—“Your name is your verb.” Discuss how this informs the way we will study God’s names and what we can learn about Him from them.

What is one practical and specific way you can carry the name of God with you this week? Think about ways you can invest in and influence your community.

A free leader guide with discussion questions is available for download at [lifeway.com/namesofgod](http://lifeway.com/namesofgod).