

Podcast 252 Praise His Name

Much of my life revolves around our son John. He's 33 as of this week. When Johnny has an event coming up, he focuses on that one thing, and we hear about it frequently. We've been hearing about his birthday for several weeks, and it finally came to pass. He enjoys looking forward to events in the future, but can get anxious about when they are coming to pass so we have a calendar for him. That takes a lot of the pressure off.

This year on his birthday, we went to breakfast at the local diner. Most times they bring him out a waffle with whipped cream and then they sing to him. Last year, he got the idea that he not only wanted whipped cream on top of the waffle; he wanted whipped cream in his mouth, which is what we do at home. This week we did the same thing, and he got his waffle and a pile of whipped cream on it as well as a mouth full of the blessed cream.

For lunch, one of the other shippers, Laurie, made him a cake, which was wonderful. When I returned a few hours later to pick him up, and Mike, who's deaf, he communicated to me that they hadn't sung to him because everybody had taken their lunch at different times. So we went over to the shipping area where there's about six or eight people there, and we all sang "Happy Birthday."

John is having a great celebration and on the way home, I had to order the pizza for dinner, because we were having 25-35 people for a big birthday bash for John. By the time we made the order with gluten free and vegan and regular pizza it was a large amount of pizza. So we go to Papa John's, and the girl who was working exclaims, "Johnny!" Her name is Samantha, and I learn that John has a special place in her heart. She told me that Johnny's her favorite customer! I placed the order for nine pizzas and she gave us a huge discount. I asked her about it and she said, "It's okay! It's John's birthday." So, pretty cool.

Okay, so now, today we're going to follow up on what we started last week. God is smooth, with a little bit more background. Two years ago I began seeking God according to Psalm 100, which says, "Come into His presence with singing, enter into His courts with praise, be thankful unto Him, and praise His name or bless His name." There are three components and the first one is "sing." Then I give thanks. And thirdly I bless His name, or as another translation says "praise His name."

I don't know if you've ever thought about this approach very much and yet in the Lord's Prayer beginning at Matthew 6:9, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" or "Holy be your name." In the book of Revelation, the 24 elders and the living creatures bless God's name.

Now as I do my devotions, whether it's in the car, my home, or mostly when I'm walking through our neighborhood, I draw near to God by singing a hymn or two, and then I give thanks, and then I bless His name. A

Blessing God's name has been the one that is the most labor intensive for me, because I'm used to singing, and I'm familiar with giving thanks, but to just stop and focus on one aspect of God's character or one name for God – because He's got many different names that all reveal different facets of His nature and His attributes – has required the most effort. But as I have developed this discipline of meditating and praising His name it has become the most rewarding as I'm learning more about God and who He is by the names of God in Scripture.

We are beginning a series on God's attributes. In the book I am about to release called "Come Into His Presence" I have pulled together forty studies on different names of God arranged according to the Psalm 100 sequence arranged around one theme or one attribute of God. Each study begins with a song, suggested ways to give thanks with this name of God in mind, and several Scriptures about this one attribute of God's character/

Before we go further, let's pray, and then we'll jump into this topic. Father, thank You for revealing Yourself to us. Thank You for Scripture that shows this wonderful progression from Genesis all the way to Revelation as you continue to reveal more about Who You are and what You're like to Your people. Thank You for the Spirit of God that You have sent to pen, not so much to pen, but to inspire Scripture. Thank You for Jesus, Who was God in the flesh, to reveal Your very person to us, and thank You for the written Word of God that reveals more and more, and how You have communicated with Your people in the last six thousand, seven thousand years. Help us now as we contemplate this subject. In Jesus' name, Amen.

My number one desire and motivation is to get to know God more. This has become my greatest joy, spending time in God's presence. It always wasn't my greatest desire, but it has become so in the last several years. Connecting with God is also vitally important because my relationship with God impacts the way I connect with my wife and family. After all this podcast is Building Faith Families. As a husband, God has called me to love my wife as Jesus loved me, and He's called me to love my kids as He has loved me – New Commandment. In other words, I'm supposed to emulate God, and the more I get to know God, and the more I meditate on His nature and character, the more I become like Him.

For example, we're going to talk about one of the phrases which describe God as merciful, gracious, and slow to anger. Wow. Right away, you can see the application. If God is slow to anger and as I am to love my wife and my kids like God loves and treats me, then I need to be slow to anger. In looking at God's

attributes, hopefully those attributes will rub off on me, and I'll be transformed into His image as I get to know Him better and see Him better. That's the plan.

One of the things that blesses me, as I was mediating on this subject and praying about it, is how God revealed Himself to His people in Genesis 4:26, "To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord." It's the last verse in the fourth chapter. Fascinating. People began to call upon the name of the Lord. We know that Adam and Eve had fellowship with God in the Garden, and we know that they knew Him, but then there was the Fall, and they were banned from the Garden and their intimate fellowship with God came to a close. Then Noah appears in the ninth chapter, and for several chapters, we read about the worldwide flood, because the world was such a mess that God had to wipe it out.

By the way, you're in Ohio, I'm Pennsylvania. We've had a lot of rainstorms in the last couple weeks. It goes from being hot, then the next thing you know, these thunderclouds have rolled through. But I've seen some gorgeous rainbows, and I hope people remember, I don't count on it anymore, but this rainbow is a sign that God gave that He was not going to wipe out the earth again with water. What we have to look forward to is fire. Sorry, but that's what Scripture says.

Then God begins communicating with Abraham, and you know the story. He was unable to have children. Sarah has an idea, "Go in to my maid, and we'll have children through her." But then, as soon as that girl was pregnant, she looked on her mistress differently, and her mistress kicked her out. She's out in the wilderness, she's helpless, feeling alone, and God's angel finds her, and Hagar looks up at God and says, "You are a God of seeing. Truly here I have seen Him who looks after me." (Genesis 16:13)

There are these little nuggets all the way through Scripture, but the Holy Spirit chose to record that because we get a different glimpse of God through Hagar's eyes, because she said, "He sees me." Occasionally, when I'm out praying or seeking God or waiting on Him, I'm almost overwhelmed with the fact that God sees me. God hears me. And Hagar was overwhelmed, and that was recorded in Scripture.

Then, in Genesis 17, Abraham gets his name, because in the first verse, when he was 99 years old, God appeared to him, and said, "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be called Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." So this is not the only time this happens in Scripture, but God places a lot on people's names. Not only are we going to learn about God's names, but we have to understand that God puts a lot in people's names, and He changed Abram's name. Later in the same chapter, He changed Sarai to Sarah.

During the time of Moses, we see Hoshea changed to Joshua, and in the New Testament, we see Simon was changed to Peter. and Saul was changed to Paul. Names are significant in Scripture, and it's important that we take note of them. Another name that was revealed to Abraham in the 22nd chapter of Genesis was when he was offering up his son, Isaac, and God provided a ram in his place. It says, "Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh; as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided.'" Whoo! I don't know about you, but how many times has God provided? I know we could both tell stories for the rest of the day about how God has miraculously provided for us, and every once in a while, I think of that name, Jehovah-Jireh, because God has provided for us.

Now we're going to skip through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. We're going to go to Exodus chapter 3, where God appears to Moses on the Mount. Moses said to God - and this is kind of a long portion, not a long portion, but a couple of verses - Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?' And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.''" Whew! Then He goes on to say, "The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is My name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

God introduces Himself to Moses. Moses just wants to know what to tell the people of Israel, and he wants to know what God's name is, and God connects Himself to Abraham and the patriarchs. He says, "Look, I'm the God of your father Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and My name, My memorial name, the name for which I am to be remembered through all generations, is I AM WHO I AM."

As far as I understand, those four letters, those four consonants that describe God's name in the Hebrew are YHWH, yod hey gov and hey. But in the English transliteration, they would be YHWH. If I can shift gears for a second, in the Greek we don't call Jesus Iēsous, we call Him Jesus. So it really is a JHVH. The people of Israel considered His name so precious and so holy, they never pronounced it. So we know the consonants, but we don't know what it sounded like because we don't know what the vowels were. It was many years later the Masorites added vowel points to the Hebrew.

When it came to God's name, the Masorites took the vowel points from the word for Lord and they put them with the consonants JHVH to create Jehovah. For many years I used to like to read translations that had God's name in it, because instead of seeing capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, which is in most modern translations, to signify God's personal name I would read His

real name. When you see LORD capitalized, it represents Yahweh, or Jehovah. But we know the JHVH. We know those letters.

There are certain religious denominations today that refer to Yahweh. There are others that refer to Jehovah. But I do like the fact that that was His personal name, whereas Lord seems to me to be kind of a title. You know, it's one thing when people call you Mr. Demme or Mr. Moore or they call you, "Hey, boss," or, "Sir." Those are titles, but when they say, "Hey, Scott," or, "Hey, Steve," there's more of an intimacy. There's more of a connection to know people's personal name. God revealed His personal name to Moses, and He said, "This is My name to be remembered through all generations." So His name is used thousands of times in Scripture. Sadly, though, it's hidden behind the capital LORD.

Now, if people are wondering, "Why didn't they know which vowels to sue in God's name?" By the time the Masoretic text came around, the people of Israel had read through Scripture and they had said it out loud millions of times, except for God's name. So by the time the Masoretes put in the vowel points, they knew what vowel points to put in all of the rest of Scripture because when they saw D, V as in Victor, D as DVD, sorry, they knew that was David because they'd been saying David for generations, and they just put an A and an I in there, and they knew it was David because they had heard it so many times. Sadly, we lost the exact pronunciation for JHVH. It could be Jehovah, it could be JeeHoVeeH. But still, I would rather have the consonants in there. I think and that's one reason why I used to read the ASV for many years, because it used Jehovah instead of LORD.

Of course, my Hebrew professor thought that when we get to heaven, we'll all be speaking in Hebrew. And the Greek professors would extol the virtues of the Greek New Testament because in the Greek you could discern all the tenses of the verbs. God knew what He was doing when He gave us the first portion of Scripture in Hebrew and the second portion in Greek.

Let's go back to Exodus chapter 33, where God introduces Himself to Moses. Before we consider this chapter, let's consider the context a little bit. This is after they have escaped from Egypt and Moses has gone up the mountain. He receives the Ten Commandments and comes down to discover the children of Israel are worshipping a calf. Moses smashes the Ten Commandments written on stone, went back up into the mountain for forty more days, and then in the 33rd chapter, Moses prays an incredible prayer. He says, "Please show me now Your ways that I may know You."

I heard David Howard preach a sermon on that verse decades ago. David Howard was Elisabeth Elliot's brother. I never forgot it because his heart, resonated with Moses' heart when he said, "Show me Your ways, that I may know You." Here was Moses. He had already spent forty days in God's presence,

and this encounter with the living God was just whetting his appetite. He wanted to know God more. I'm not going to read the whole chapter, but it's a precious chapter. Then four verses later, "Jehovah said to Moses, 'This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in My sight, and I know you by name.'" Isn't that powerful? God says to Moses, "I know you, and I know you by name." Wow. And Moses says, "Please show me your glory," and He says, "I will make all My goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you My name, 'Jehovah.'"

God also said, "You can't see My face, for man shall not see Me and live." And the Lord said, "Here's a place by Me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by you I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." I don't know about you, but my heart's just pounding just reading this. I'm picturing Moses up on the mountain, face to face with God. God puts His hand to cover him, and of course, if you are familiar with hymns, in my head I'm already singing Fanny Crosby's song "He Hideth My Soul in the Cleft of the Rock."

Then in the next chapter, the Lord said to Moses, I mean, right after this, "Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first. I will write on the tablets, and then come on up. I'll give you the Ten Commandments." And then it says, 34th chapter 5th verse, "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood before him and proclaimed the name of Jehovah. "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but Who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

This is God introducing Himself to the world, with those incredible words, "Merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." And what was intriguing to me as I've been doing these studies is I've discovered that not only did God speak this word to Moses, but several other of the significant personages in the Old testament used the same words when they were describing God. Nehemiah quoted this passage. Jonah did as well. They kept saying this same verse over and over. They say, "We know You. You are slow to anger. You are merciful and gracious. You are full of steadfast love and faithfulness."

These men, these saints, over a period of hundreds of years, never let go of how God first introduced Him on Mount Sinai to Moses, and they held on to that, and that's how they knew God and what He was like. And they held onto Him because of His name that He'd revealed to Moses. So this is a good place to stop for part one. I love God, and I love knowing more about Him, and I love

His name, and I love meditating and thinking about, each of these aspects of God's character.

Father, thank You for revealing Yourself to Moses on the mountain. Thank You for starting way back at the time of Seth and where people began calling on Your name. Thank You for introducing Yourself to Moses before he embarked on that perilous journey in and out of Egypt and led the children of Israel the way he did. You spoke to him, and You revealed Yourself to him. Thank You for this glimpse into Your nature and character. And thank You that while Abraham changed and Sarah changed and Paul and Peter changed and had their names changed to be reflective of that transformation, thank You that You never change. You're the same yesterday, today, and forever. You are the eternal one, and we worship You and thank You for this glimpse into Your nature. In Jesus' name, Amen.