

One Supreme Being

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Preacher: Rev. Clive Jennings

[0 : 0 0] It's no surprise that we have the reading from Genesis because as I think it was made famous I think by Julie Andrews, let's start at the very beginning, it's a very good place to start when we think about the names of God. But names are so important. Names are so important and it's how we name things that we grow into relationship with them. And it's like this one. I named my dog Five Miles so I can now tell people I walk five miles every day.

The next one. David Waterhouse. He just happens to be a boat owner. Next one here. If you're going to marry somebody and double hyphenate your name, McDonald Burger is very an interesting one. This next one. Hey, Christian Guy. What a great name. Who wants to live in a place called Dull? Names are important. As we enter this new series, we'll explore what those names mean as we move through our teaching each week. I'm never surprised when I plan for a funeral and the name of the person who I've known for a long time bore no resemblance to their birth name whatsoever.

You have to ask. It's interesting how their first name, they were baptized. We too can have several names that are attributed to us that have been shortened. Maybe people were known as Babs where they were Barbara or maybe they were known as Tony for Anthony. And the generalization of names, how we use generalized things like, all right, mate, when you can't remember somebody's name, or if you're in Bristol, all right, my lover. That goes down very well.

Then there are names that aren't helpful. And we all know that sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me. What a lie that was. Because many of us will have grown up knowing within that setting of names that have been quite cruel and hurtful. I recall I was at a kid with school and sadly his ears were at right angles and his teeth protruded. And he was known as Plug from the Beano. And from the day I started school to the end of secondary school, he was always known as Plug. You know, and you think back and you think how cruel that is. Names have significance and importance.

Names stick. Names identify us. We might be named after a parent or a grandparent. Some of us may have long names where they've tried to include every member of our family in the family tree, not to upset anybody at our baptism. You know, maybe we're named after a famous person or a celebrity. You know, I understand Kylie and Jason were very popular at one stage in a season. I haven't met many Draculas in my life though. And then there are many people who are named after biblical figures. And it seemed at one time that if you were born as a Peter, you were likely to become the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

[3 : 23] I think it probably just saved them changing the name on the door, really. But names are important. They're important to us. Perhaps you were in a generation at school where you were called by your surname. You know, so many people, maybe at public school or wherever, you were known by your surname. Or if you were in the armed forces, you were known or in the forces, you were known by your number. You know, I still, when my force number comes up or I see it on a number plate, it still resonates with me. Oh my goodness, that's my force number. And you, but never the same, it's never the same as being called by your first name. There is something that is really important. So often Jesus called people by name and they responded. They identify us. Names identify us. And especially when it comes to God with his many names used by different cultures, it gives us windows into God's character, the character of God. As we saw this morning in our reading, through whose names we learn as best we can about who God is, what God has done for us, what God is doing for us, that God is the same today as he always was. And what he is ready to do in our lives and coming to understand that in the name in which we address him. Many of you may recall that there are cards that we produced some time ago here with the names of Jesus. When we had the name of Jesus, what does that mean to you? And in that we saw the person of Jesus. People wrote, you are the sovereign Lord. You are my shoulder to lean on. You are my bringer of light. You are my creator. You are my father. You are the one who saves. You are the stiller of storms.

That thing of familiarity and relationship that we can build through knowing the names of God and how we address him. Names and descriptions of affection, honour, truth, sovereignty, and friendship. In the Old Testament, we explore over the coming weeks individually as a home group, as a church, we will see and encounter more closely what these names of God meant to people at that time and what they mean to us as well. Some people come to this area of study treating it like a historical event. Yet the God who revealed himself here at the beginning of time to Moses all the way through is the same God that relates to us now.

Not an historical figure, not lost in the passage of time, but real and alive and passionate for us as he ever was for his people when he looked at them and looked at the world and said, it is good.

And I think sometimes we need to remind ourselves of that when we address God, that in that loving kindness of God, he looks at us and says, there is the potential. I have seen that because I have placed that in you to be all that I wanted you to be. And as we pray and we thank God and we cry out to him, what names do you use on those times when we cry out to God? You know, when we give him thanks and praise, but often in the depths of how we cry out to him. You know, have you ever had one of those calls from a call centre? And you're talking to somebody and the first thing they say is, what would you like me to call you? Have you had that? I think it's really interesting, isn't it?

The person on the other end wants a relationship with you. They want to know. They don't want to just treat you as another call. Okay, maybe there may be an agenda they want to sell you something, but I think it's quite personal that they actually want to address you by name. And I find that really helpful. And I don't know about you, I often go back and say, that's really helpful. Sorry, what's your first name? I miss that. It sort of starts a conversation, doesn't it, really?

[7 : 47] It was really great. I had a lady once, I phoned up for an insurance quote and she said, oh, and she went through and she said, oh, this car insurance. She said, well, so what do you do, my vicar? And I said, oh, I'm a vicar. And she said, really? She said, oh, I'm thinking about getting married in six months' time. And we had about 20 minutes conversation about what she thought about her ideas about doing a wedding and what she should do and how she should go about it. And at the end, I said, about the quote. And she said, oh, that's great. She said, I can give you a discretionary 20%.

And I thought, well, that was a good 20 minutes spent, wasn't it? I always struggle a bit at Tesco's as well, because often when you're shopping in Asden Tesco's, you find a little voice, especially if you've been in school during the week, that shouts out, hello, Reverend Jennings. You know, you think, oh my goodness, it's that as everybody turns around.

You know, you turn around to the parents, go, no, it's Clive. That's okay. Often we struggle as to how to address God, because it has to be relational. You know, God the Father, Jesus the Saviour, Spirit of Holiness, God Almighty, God of Glory. I just pray in this series as we move through this, that we will find ways of deepening, deepening our relationship in intimacy with God, in the way in which we address him and we relate with him and we grow deeper into that relationship that God seeks for us and with each and every one of us.

So how do we relate that to people outside? Well, you know as well as I do, that in our encounters with people who may say, well, I don't believe in God and I never will. You know, and the question is, well, actually, you've used the word of God. So what do you actually mean by God? And in your experience, if anything is like mine, you get this, I respond so, and I hope you respond by saying, so why is that? Why is that? Or why does, you know, and then you get some of the glib stuff of, you know, in your experience, if anything like mine, you know, people will give you a pretty glib rebuff, well, you know, of all the suffering in the world, or why does God allow earthquakes?

But some will pause. Some people will pause and come back with a very reasoned thought, thinking through. I don't know, because maybe I've never encountered anything of God.

[10 : 34] Maybe I've never encountered that has convinced me that God is really there. God may exist, I guess, but he doesn't seem to care about me or know me. I don't even know how to address him or connect with him. What a gift that is for us to actually help people to engage with this name of God. It's an interesting response, and one which we all have to ask ourselves as discipleships of Jesus.

In fact, let's do that now. Let's ask ourselves. I'll give you a minute or so, maybe to talk amongst yourselves or just to reflect with somebody near you. So, why do you believe God exists? Why do you personally believe that God exists in this relationship that you have with him and by name? Just take a few moments, if you'd like to just discuss that with somebody next to you. Why do you, you personally, why do you believe that God exists?

What has been your experience? I'll leave you to reflect or to just chat to somebody next to you. Just take a moment, because it was a good question that I found this asking.

It's a really interesting question to ask, isn't it? It's fascinating. I'm not going to go around the room because I'm sure that we'll all have our own stories, but it would be good to share that more and more with each other as we go through this series. It's because, as you noticed this morning, the writers of the Bible never set out to prove the existence of God, especially in our reading today.

There is no arm twisting. They just declare that he is, that God is. And as we've heard in our reading, that he is impersonally involved with our world and its creation and us, the people that he created.

[12 : 52] And in the first verse of the Bible, we come to this face-to-face with Elohim, the awesome God of creation. We read about what he has done, the significance of the order of creation, our place and significance in that order, and our responsibility too.

God as our one creator being, majestic, powerful creator. Everyone and everything else had a beginning, but God has always existed. Before the world was, I am. There's another name to explore, I am. And as we consider names, we take on then, if God looks at us and loves us and knows us and made us, then we take on the family likeness. And being known as a child of God in that name is so important. As we've often sung, maybe time and time and time again, I am a child of God. To take on that, being known as a child of God, we are adopted, we are in relationship, deep relationship. In the best scenario of parenthood, and I'm talking about the best scenario, we take on the positive and good attributes of the personal persons who raise us. And we as children of God are created in God's image, and therefore we should reflect a likeness. We can reflect that in us and through us by what we have been named by him in our being, in our character to create a God. Therefore, to know him is to experience him, to acknowledge him in every part of our lives, the majestic and majesty of God our Father. To know someone by name is so important as we travel together through this series.

To know somebody by name is so important. I hope in this series, and it's great to open a series like this, as we start to really go deeper and explore and explore, is to the names and our relationship with God in the names that we use.

It is not an academic exercise. It is a relational exercise of which we're moving into. And maybe you might find it helpful, as I have done, as I've been looking at this, to actually take a psalm. I've taken Psalm 8 to read over these coming weeks, as we grow deeper in relationship with him. And our response to him is the one to whom we adore, the one whom we worship, the one whom we follow, the one we respond to, the one in which we are in love with, the one in which we worship, the one in which we believe is so awesome in our lives.

Psalm 8, the awesomeness of God. thee away. Two jars and sails of God. Shall they use the pad ■■■■ ■i sus mad? P ■■■■c. God.

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Te heores de Vor.