A Study for Children on the Names and Character of God

By Sally Michael

English Standard Version
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A WORD ABOUT “GROWING IN FAITH” SHEETS
A NOTE TO PARENTS

*Lessons preceded by an asterisk are lessons which are possible to omit if less than 40 weeks are available for your study.
PREFACE

Perhaps you are wondering, “Why a study for children on the names of God? Isn’t it enough for children to know a few terms such as God, Good Shepherd, Jesus, Messiah, and Savior? Do they really need to know all these names that many adults don’t even know?”

While it is true that children do not NEED to know all these names, a study of God’s names is spiritually PROFITABLE because a study of the names of God is a study of the character of God. As children see who God really is, the irresistible goodness and greatness of His character will draw them to Him. How can you help but admire a God such as Elohim, who created the whole universe from within Himself? How can you help but stand in awe of Jehovah, who exists without need of anyone or anything? How can you not be attracted to Jehovah-Jireh, who anticipates your every need? How can you not be comforted by El Roi, who sees every situation you face in life, or by Jehovah-Shammah, who is “there” for you at all times? How can you not love Jehovah-Rohi, who watches over you with a Shepherd’s love for His sheep? As the Scripture says:

*And those who know Your name put their trust in You, for You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You. Psalm 9:10*

It is my prayer that as you study these names and the character of God is impressed on your mind and on your heart, you and those whom you teach will respond like David, “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:1a).

*In His name,*

*Sally Michael*
LESSON 4 –

JEHOVAH, YAHWEH, I AM

Self-existent One, Unchanging One

SCIENTURE: Exodus 3:2-3, 4, 6; Acts 17:24-25; (Esther 4:4); (Luke 19:40); (Luke 3:8); Psalm 102:25-27; (Isaiah 34:4)

MEMORY VERSE: (Choose one of the following)

Acts 17:24-25—The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Romans 11:34-36—“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has given a gift to Him that he might be repaid?” For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

KEY THEMES:

• God exists by His own power. (He does not need anyone or anything; He never gets used up or wears out.)
• God does not change. (What God is, He always will be.)

WORSHIP SONGS:

• We Bow Down by Twila Paris (© 1984 Singspiration Music/Benson Music Group, Inc.)

PRONUNCIATION: JEHOVAH, YAHWEH—je hoe vuh, yaw way

VISUALS/MATERIALS: Bible; name and meaning sheet (from Resource Packet); page with the letters YHVH and YHWH (from the Resource Packet); small section of newspaper; metal pan large enough to burn twisted newspaper; matches; flashlight with a weak (not dead) battery; light bulb; brand new article of clothing; worn-out article of clothing

PREPARATION:

Study the Scripture passages carefully and prayerfully. Ask God to make them real in your own heart. Be open to what God may be teaching you in this lesson. Study the lesson well. Pray for the children in your class.

Twist the newspaper section so it stays tight, easy to light.

INTRODUCTION

❖ Explain how Bibles were made in Bible times. Make the following points.

• They were copied very carefully by hand by men called scribes.
• A scribe wouldn't write the name of God with the same pen with which he wrote other names. He had a special “God pen.” It was only used for writing God's name.

Be sure to become familiar with this information so that you can tell about Bibles rather than reading this list.

Tell the children, as necessary, who a scribe was and what he did before asking why they think a scribe would do these things.
• When the scribe would get to the name of God, he would leave a blank space. Later he would go back and write in the name of God with the “God pen.”
• Each time he wrote the name of God, he would say, “I am writing the name of God for the holiness of His name.”
• If he made a mistake while writing God's name, he would destroy the whole page of papyrus or vellum.

Ask the children why they think a scribe would do this. [God's name is very precious.]

LESSON

Explain that the second name of God that we are going to talk about is the Hebrew name Jehovah or Yahweh. It is sometimes written LORD in the English Bible. It is the name for God used most often in the Bible. It is God's personal name; maybe something like our first names.

We really aren't sure how to pronounce this name because in Hebrew, the name was written without vowels as JHVH or YHWH.

Ask the children how they would pronounce JHVH or YHWH.

Explain that we have added vowels to make the name easier to pronounce, but the rabbis would not pronounce the name “Jehovah” or “Yahweh.”

Ask the children why they think the rabbis would not pronounce the name Jehovah or Yahweh. [Out of respect for the name of God—the name of God is precious.]

Show a twisted section of newspaper and explain the following:

If I light this with a match, will it burn? (Light paper and drop it in a pan as it burns smaller.)

Will a dry wad of paper always burn up? Would you think it odd if this paper kept burning and burning? What would you do if you saw something like that?

I would probably check it out—just like Moses checked out the burning bush. He must have thought it was odd that the bush was burning but not burning up.

Have a child read Exodus 3:2-3:

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.”

Ask the children why this was a strange sight and why the bush did not burn up.

Have a child read Exodus 3:4:

When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."
Explain that the fire in the bush was a symbol of the presence of God. God kept the bush from burning up because He is all-powerful, unchanging, and self-existent. The name Jehovah or Yahweh means Self-existent One, Unchanging One.

Ask the children if they remember what God told Moses to do when Moses approached the bush? [He told Moses to take off his shoes because Moses was standing on holy ground.]

Ask them why they think God told Moses to take off his shoes.

Illustrate this by role-playing the following:

How would you approach a king or a queen? Would you run up to a queen, slap her on the back, and say, “Hi ya, queenie. How ya doin’?”
(Demonstrate.)

How would you approach a king or a queen? (Let child demonstrate.)

Explain that God instructed Moses on how to approach Him. Remind the children that God is greater than anyone else. He deserves respect. In Bible times, slaves went barefoot as a sign of submission; a sign that they were less than their masters. By telling Moses to take his shoes off, God was saying, “I am great and worthy of respect. I am the self-existent, unchanging God of the universe. I am greater than you. You are like a servant to Me."

Have a Sword Drill with Exodus 3:6:

And He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Ask the children why Moses “was afraid to look at God.” [God was so awesome, and Moses was so puny.]

Explain that God told Moses that He was going to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt— that He was going to set them free, and He was going to send Moses back to Egypt to talk to Pharaoh. Since God is greater than all, and because we are His creation, He has the right to command us.

Ask the children if they remember what Moses asked God. [What is your name?]

Ask the children how God answered Moses. [“I AM WHO I AM.” He told Moses to tell the people of Israel that “I AM” had sent him.]

Illustrate the meaning of “I AM”:

Does that sound like an odd name? “I AM.” The name Jehovah or Yahweh means I AM.

Let me see if I can show you what that means. (Show a flashlight with a weak battery.) What is going to

In the role-play you may want to set up the idea of respect, awe, submission, or admiration to royalty when asking children to demonstrate. Then you can relate this to Moses taking off his shoes, and ask why Moses was afraid to look at God. God’s royal position is greater than any king or queen.

Emphasize that because we are God’s creation (relate back to Lesson 3 on Elohim), He has the right to command us.

See Sword Drill directions on page 15.
happen to this battery? It will get used up and the flashlight won't work unless I put a new battery in it or I recharge this one. How about this light bulb? If I put it in a lamp it will give light longer than the flashlight will. But what will happen to the light bulb? It will wear out. God is not like that. He never wears out; He never gets used up. Maybe that was what He was trying to show Moses by burning the bush but not burning it up.

Do you know why God never wears out or gets used up? Because He doesn't need anything or anyone. He exists all by Himself.

Can a baby exist all by himself? No, he needs a parent to take care of him. God doesn't need anyone to take care of Him. What happened to the fire on our paper? Why did it go out? It needed something to burn or it couldn't exist. When the paper was gone, the fire went out. God is not like that. He doesn't need anything to exist or to live. God will go on forever and ever because He doesn't need anything to keep Him existing. Jehovah, who lived long ago in Bible times, lives now, and will live in the future. Jehovah or Yahweh means I AM. Jehovah means “Self-existent”—it means God exists (lives) by Himself with the help of nothing and no one and will never change.

- Ask the children if they can think of anything or anyone else that doesn't need anything or anyone else to exist.

- Explain that we need food, water, and air to breathe. We need rest and protection from the elements of nature. We need to be loved. And we need God. But God doesn't need anyone or anything. He is Jehovah, Yahweh, I Am, the Self-existent One.

Look up Acts 17:24-25:

*The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

- Explain that God does not need anything or anyone. He exists by His own power. He alone created all men and gives them life and breath and everything man needs. All of life comes from God.

Sometimes we mistakenly think that God “needs” us to do His work in this world. But God doesn't need anyone or anything.

See Esther 4:4, Luke 19:40, and Luke 3:8. If you have time, you may want discuss these examples. (God could bring help “from another quarter”; He didn’t need Esther. God doesn’t need us. He can cause the rocks to cry out in praise to Him. God is able to raise followers from the rocks.)

- Show a nice, new article of clothing. Ask the children what will become of it. Show an old worn out piece of clothing and comment that it used to look new and nice, but is now worn out. (You may also want to give the example of a car that was once shiny and new which has become old and rusty.)

**THEME:** The Bible tells us that everything will wear out but God will always be “I AM.” What God is, He always will be.

You can emphasize these points in the Scripture; or ask the children to do it. Confirm and reinforce what the children discover.
Look up Psalm 102:25-27:

Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but You are the same, and Your years have no end.

✓ Explain that even the world is wearing out–Isaiah 34:4 says that “All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.” Although this world and everything in it is wearing out, God remains unchanged!

✓ Explain that the name, Yahweh, also carries the meaning “The Unchanging One.” Since God does not depend on anyone or anything for His existence, no “force” can change Him. What God is, He will always be.

- God is all-powerful. That will not change, because God is unchanging. He will always be powerful.
- God is all-knowing. That will not change, because God is unchanging. He will always be all-knowing.
- God is gracious, merciful, just, and faithful. That will never change. God will always be gracious, merciful, just, and faithful.

What God has been in the past, He is today, and He will be tomorrow.

APPLICATION
Read Psalm 121:4. What does this say about God?

What is so great about God existing all by Himself? (e.g., He never gets used up; He would never accept a bribe because He doesn't need anything; He never has to abandon His purposes in order to get “recharged”; He does not require sleep; He will never cease to exist because He is not dependent on anything else for His existence; other things fail, but you can trust in God because He is permanent and unchanging; etc.)

How does this help you in your life?

What does it mean for you that God does not change? (You can start this discussion by imagining what things would be like if God changed. What would this world be like? What would God's nature be like? What would your relationship with God be like?)

ACTIVITIES
1. If you have chosen not to work on the workbook page during the application time, children could work on the workbook page. Suggested illustrations: burning bush, fancy letters spelling YHWH, a memory verse, anything that reminds you that God needs nothing or that He doesn’t wear out.

2. Work on a long-term project, such as a bulletin board, mural, or banner (banner instructions and sample appear in the Appendix). One idea for a bulletin board is to cut out the letters of the name and meaning, and a figure to illustrate the name. Each week add a new name to the bulletin board.

Application can most effectively be done in a small group setting. The questions are just suggestive of possible directions to take the discussion. Pray for wisdom and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. Be sensitive to the answers and the needs of the children.

The application discussion is a strategic opportunity to encourage the students to interact with the truths just taught and to discover how to integrate these truths into everyday life. See the curriculum Introduction for further instruction.

Be sure to pray for the children and encourage them to pray for each other. Pray about any need that has arisen and that the children will trust God.

Following the discussion with the workbook activity may give you further discussion opportunity with individual students.
3. Make a nametag for God saying:

JEHOVAH, YAHWEH, I AM: Self-existent One, Unchanging One

Send home instructions that the nametag can be placed on a poster board to make a big nametag for God and that each week another name will be sent home to place on the poster board; or keep a poster board for each child in the classroom and send it home when it is finished.

SEND HOME
• Parent Resource Page and Growing in Faith page
**JEHOVAH, YAHWEH,**
**I AM**

**Self-existent One,**
**Unchanging One**

**SCRIPTURE:** Exodus 3:2-3, 4, 6; Acts 17:24-25; (Esther 4:4); (Luke 19:40); (Luke 3:8); Psalm 102:25-27; (Isaiah 34:4)

**MEMORY VERSE:**
Romans 11:34-36—“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has given a gift to Him that he might be repaid?” For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

**KEY THEMES:**
- God exists by His own power. (He does not need anyone or anything; He never gets used up or wears out.)
- God does not change. (What God is, He always will be.)

Here’s what to do on the next page:
Think of how you could illustrate the fact that God doesn’t need anything and that He doesn’t wear out. Maybe you could use a burning bush or a Bible verse or fancy letters spelling YHWH.
JEHOVAH, YAHWEH, I AM
Self-existent One, Unchanging One
**Parent Resource Page**

**How Majestic Is Your Name: Lesson 4**

**JEHOVAH, YAHWEH, I AM**

**Self-existent, Unchanging One**

**SCRIPTURE:** Exodus 3:2-3, 4, 6; Acts 17:24-25; (Esther 4:4); (Luke 19:40); (Luke 3:8); Psalm 102:25-27; (Isaiah 34:4)

**MEMORY VERSE:** (Choose one of the following)

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**KEY THEMES:**

- God exists by His own power. (He does not need anyone or anything; He never gets used up or wears out.)
- God does not change. (What God is, He always will be.)

**PRONUNCIATION:** JEHOVAH- YAHWEH– je hoe vuh, yaw way

**IDEAS FOR PARENT FOLLOW-UP:**

1. Help your child memorize the memory verse.
2. Read the above Scriptures, and think about the key themes.
3. Deuteronomy 6:6, 7 instructs us, “…these words…shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” Therefore, in the everyday circumstances of life, when you are driving in the car, eating a meal, performing a chore or any of the multitude of activities in which parents and children are engaged together, bring Jehovah, Self-existent One, Unchanging One, into the conversation. For example: If your child expresses fear before going to bed, remind him that God will be there all night and in the morning. He will cause the sun to rise just as it always does. God will not run out of power to sustain the universe or to watch over him.
4. Pray that your child will rest in the unchanging character of God, and that he find his security in God.
5. Encourage your child to complete his Parent Resource Page.