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To Know Him by Name—Adonai

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Genesis 15:1-2

We're looking at the revealed names of God, because knowing your God means everything. Everything. Realizing that this sounds melodramatic, I share these thoughts with you about knowing God:

- It's the difference between victory and defeat.
- It's the difference between rest and constant turmoil.
- It's the difference between an abundant, overflowing life and a life of barren emptiness.
- It's the difference between deliverance and captivity.
- It's the difference between finding a refuge and living as a fugitive.
- It's the difference between life and death.
- It's the difference between heaven and hell.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe." Proverbs 18:10.

Why is Tiger Woods' wife so mad? I mean, she has him...*most* of the time. All that success, all that money, all those endorsements, all those blessings, that family, that career, those choices, those people looking up to him; and he blows it. It's really upsetting. It's just wrong. And it's *so sad*. I only wish *we* got as upset when we only give *ourselves* to our relationships *most* of the time, or when we give ourselves to God *most* of the time.

My friend Grace Imathiu from Kenya tells this story: There once was a man who had a dream. He dreamed of the perfect house for himself. He drew up the plans, and one day, he started on his dream house. He spent everything he had to build that house. There was nothing left over. So that man built that house, and it took him years, and it was everything he wanted it to be. After it was done, he lived in it one month, and had to sell it, because he was so in debt. He found someone to buy the house from him. But he was so sad, that he said to the buyer, "I put so much into the house, I just ask that you let me have one nail to hang my hat on." The buyer was kind. They put it into the contract. The one nail was on the front porch, and the man who built the house had a key to the front porch, and he loved to come and hang his hat. He'd stop by once or twice every month or so. And it seemed to work out. But he still wished he had his house back.

That's why, when he saw a donkey dead on side of the road, he had an idea. He dragged that dead donkey back with him. And he hung it on the nail. The man who now owned the house was a little put off, but after all, he didn't own that nail, so he couldn't really say anything. So the donkey stayed there. But by the fourth week, the donkey stank so bad, the man who bought the house had to leave the house. It was making him sick, so he gave up the house and just left.

You know, that's how sin works. That's how evil works; even when we give our lives to Jesus and become Christ followers. I give Jesus my life, my whole house. But I keep for myself this one little nail... Evil needs just one nail. "Just let me hold on to this one little grudge. After all, this person really offended me. That person really hurt me..." One little nail...with a donkey on it can stink the Holy Spirit right out of it.

Why? Because God's name is *Adonai*—Lord, Master, or Owner, and God designed you and me one way and one way only: for Him to be our Lord God, with nothing held back. It can't work any other way.

There are so many ways we will come to know God, but will never know God, if we don't make God our *Adonai*. The name is first used in Genesis 15:1-2. Genesis 15:1 *After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."* 2 *But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless"?*

In this there are 2 names there in Sovereign LORD. *Adonai* goes with the word Sovereign. Abraham had just experienced a great victory against powerful enemies and enormous odds, and after coming to know God as *El Elyon*, God Most High and Sovereign of the universe, Abram acknowledged God's lordship over his *own* life. Over all that Abram had. Over all he was. Abram, a man with firsthand knowledge of the master-slave relationship, called Him *Adonai*. Lord. Master. Owner. What was God up to? Helping one man to know him more? Only partly. God was actually building a nation through which He would send His Son to call the world back to Him, moving through Abraham.

Before you can really know God as *El Shaddai*, the all-sufficient One, I think you must bow before Him as *Adonai*, your Lord and Master.

I was worried this one would be hard for us to grasp, since we don't have masters and servants. But the fact is, we do. Anyone who has struggled with something controlling your life knows what it is to be mastered: maybe it's drugs. Or an addiction. Or a destructive attitude. Or something in your past you can't seem to get over. Or a struggle. Or a health issue. Or a worry. And you've been mastered by it. It comes to you by night. It comes to you in the middle of the day. It interrupts your life. You're literally a slave to it. But imagine if you gave yourself over to God to be mastered. Imagine being a servant of God's! And God's called YOU to be His.

Maybe the reason you're so bored with your faith is you've never given yourself over. You've never truly bowed your knee to *Adonai* and owned Him as Lord, Sovereign Master over all your life. You've never used all your powers for Him.

Listen to Jesus' words in His Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7:21 *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter."* Listen to the Message paraphrase: ²¹⁻²³ *"Knowing the correct password—saying 'Master, Master,' for instance— isn't going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—doing what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, 'Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.' And do you know what I am going to say? 'You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don't impress me one bit. You're out of here.'*

As Americans, we think giving ourselves over to someone to be our "Master" is a bad thing. We think in terms of freedom and independence, and can't imagine a truly good master. But that's only because we're so messed up. When the One you turn your life over to is the living God revealed in Jesus Christ, it's the BEST thing that could ever happen to us! (It's not the easiest thing, and God will take you places you on your own wouldn't be prepared to go). But we heard "Master," or "Lord" and we think power trip. But *Adonai* is not a power trip for God. It's a love thing.

And God desires to be our sovereign Lord. Either Jesus is Lord of all, or He's not Lord at all. Our big problem as Christ-followers is **Partial Lordship**. God doesn't want to share you. And for good reason! Listen. If you think you can not give yourself over to God, and find some other benevolent master out there, good luck. There "ain't none." And for those of you who would never fall for some other master "out there," be careful, because even the master "in here" in your heart is no more "benevolent" than your current feelings or state of mind or your background or the latest thing you've read in any given moment. 1 John 2 says "even our hearts betray us. But God is greater than our hearts."

Partial Lordship may or may not be a problem. It's *not* a problem if you think it's okay to tell the truth 90% of the time. It's not a problem if you tell your wife you're there for her 6 nights per week. Partial Lordship means you can keep talking to your family in ways and tones you would *never* use with an acquaintance or an employer. Partial Lordship means you can continue to put your loved ones on the back burner and keep going in all the self-centered ways you want. Partial Lordship means you can stay comfortable and sheltered.

You don't have to get *your* hands dirty and act to make a difference for people who don't *know* the goodness of God, or who don't have enough to eat, or a place to sleep. Partial Lordship means all that.

The only question it doesn't answer is "Where's your heart?"

If God is God, then He must be *Adonai*—He must be Master. Owner.

If Jesus is God, then He, too, must be *Jehovah Adonai*. Lord. Master. Jude warns us: "*3 I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.* What has happened is that some people have infiltrated our ranks (our Scriptures warned us this would happen), who beneath their pious skin are shameless. Their design is to replace the sheer grace of our God with sheer license—which means doing away with Jesus Christ, our one and only Master.

This week, "nail it." Whatever struggle you're facing. Whatever choice you're facing. Whatever opportunity or conversation or conflict or comfort you're facing, look at it as a nail in your house. Give it over to your *Lord God Adonai*, before some dead donkey can end up there. When God is our Master, when we're not just putting ourselves first, we can know this: God is a good Master. God is a good Lord. He is already in His proper place, but when you put yourself under Him and His authority, the way He originally intended, you know it's got to be good; not easy, but good. It might be experiencing love you've never known. And peace, and joy, and hope like you've never known. How it was meant to be, as it was in the beginning.

Imagine this Christmas with everything in its proper, originally-intended place. God's already in His perfect place. Imagine you with your heart there too. With Him at the center. You're owned, you're so owned. So praise Him, praise Adonai, and live it out, that others would know. Amen.