

Facilitator Notes for "Knowing God by Name"

Lesson 16 – *Yahweh Shammah* – *The LORD is There* -

Ezekiel 48:35; 36:24-28; Rev21:1-5, 22-27; 22:1-5

PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.

Questions

Historical Background - In Lesson 15, we saw the prophet *Jeremiah* announcing to God's people that because of their refusal to repent of their rebellion against God and their continuing sins of *idolatry, immorality* and *injustice*, God was going to pass judgment on them and their nation in order to purify them. Their judgment consisted of the complete destruction of their land, including the city of Jerusalem and the beautiful temple that King Solomon had built, where God's *glory* and *Presence* resided in the holy of holies. Except for a small, poor group of people who were left behind (*Jeremiah* among them), the entire population of Judah was taken to live in captivity, in Babylon, for 70 years. For the first time since children of Israel were delivered from slavery in Egypt, *Yahweh* no longer lived with his people; with the destruction of the temple, his *Presence* and *glory* were withdrawn.

While *Jeremiah* was prophesying in Jerusalem, the prophet *Ezekiel* was giving the same message of judgment to the captives who were beginning to arrive in Babylon. As their years of captivity wore on, the people did become repentant; they were sorry for their sins and they grieved the loss and destruction of their homeland, the holy city of Jerusalem and its beautiful temple. But, just as God foretold, their captivity continued. However, to assure his people that he had not forgotten them and that his judgment would not last forever, God gave *Ezekiel* prophecies of **renewal, hope** and **restoration**. A day was coming, said *Yahweh*, when he would restore to his people their land, their nation and their worship. And most of all, they could look forward to a brand new relationship with their God.

1. One of the ways God encouraged his exiled people was to give *Ezekiel* a stunning and mysterious vision of a future, beautiful temple where God would return with his glory (**Ezekiel 40-48**) and a new holy city where his people would live (**Ezekiel 48:15-35**). What is the name of this new city (**Ezekiel 48:35**) and what do you think is the significance of this name to the exiles in Babylonia?

The name of the city in the vision comes at the very end of its description: **THE LORD IS THERE**. This is significant because the captives in Babylon were no longer experiencing God's presence. They had lost their homeland that God had given them and had seen the destruction of the temple where God's glory had resided. They were without God's presence in a foreign land, so it was very encouraging to them to know that someday there would be a new temple and new holy city and the most important thing about this promise was that God would be there with them again.

- ♥ *The Lord is There* is *Yahweh Shammah* in Hebrew and it speaks of **God's presence with his people**. Would you say that God's presence is with you? How so? Has God's presence always been with you? If God's presence is with you, what are some ways that you are most aware of his Presence?

Read **Ezekiel 36:24-28**. The "I" in these verses is *Yahweh*. He is speaking to his people through *Ezekiel*.

2. List all the specific promises *Yahweh* makes to his people who are in captivity in Babylon.

Yahweh will:

- Bring the back to their own land from the nations in which they have been scattered
- Cleanse them from their sins and idol worship
- Give them a new heart and put a new spirit in them; removing their hard hearts of stone and giving them a soft heart of flesh
- Put his own Spirit in their hearts so that they will obey
- Give them back the Promised Land
- Be their God and they will be his people

- ♥ If you were an exile, in captivity, away from home, experiencing a loss of God's presence because of disobedience, which of these promises would be most comforting to you? Why?

- ♥ Which of God's promises in these verses have you experienced? 1) Cleansing? 2) Stony heart transplant? 3) Power to obey? 4) Returning "home" after wandering away? How did it happen? Which of these would you like to see happen now? Why?
 - ♥ What does the phrase, "*You will be my people and I will be your God*" (36:28) imply? More than anything, this phrase indicates **relationship and belonging**. Love is not mentioned, but it is insinuated. There seems to be a sense of "let's start over and do it right." This phrase describes the relationship between God and humans before sin ruined the relationship. Someday, we will fully be what we were created to be. Variations of this phrase are found throughout the Bible. Is this phrase true for everyone? It is only true of those who are in relationship with God. Is it true for you? If so, what difference does it make in your life? What is the connection between this phrase and God's presence? There cannot be a relationship without presence. In order for God to be our God and for us to be his people, we have to be **with** each other.
3. **Galatians 3:29** (along with other Scriptures) tells us that if we belong to Christ, we are the true children of Abraham and heirs of all the promises of God given to his chosen people. Of the promises God gave the exiles in **36:24-28**, which have already been fulfilled, which are partially fulfilled and which promises are we still waiting to be fulfilled?

Bring the back to their own land from the nations in which they have been scattered – the nation of Israel was completely destroyed in 70 A.D. and was not re-established again until 1948. Even though Israel exists now, it is not being ruled by a king from David's royal line

Cleanse them from their sins and idol worship – this has partially been fulfilled in that those who have accepted Jesus as Messiah and Savior have been cleansed from their sins, but as a nation, Israel does not follow the Messiah. To those who received this promise when Ezekiel wrote it, **cleaning from sin** was particularly meaningful since sin in the Old Testament was never really cleansed, but rather covered by the blood of animal sacrifices. And now, for the exiles, even the sacrifices in the temple were not being made.

Give them a new heart and put a new spirit in them; removing their hard hearts of stone and giving them a soft heart of flesh – again, partially fulfilled for those who have repented of their sin and accepted Christ.

Put his own Spirit in their hearts so that they will obey – partially fulfilled since Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given to live in the hearts of believers.

Give them back the Promised Land – this process has begun – but God is not necessarily acknowledged yet in the process

Be their God and they will be his people – This, again, is true only for believers, but God's Kingdom has not been fully established on earth yet.

- ♥ Someone has said, "*The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.*" What do you think the saying means? The motives that drive actions come from the heart. If the heart is sinful and rebellious, so will be the actions. Humans can change only if the heart changes – so the our hearts are really the problem or the solution to the problem. What is God's solution for the human heart (36:26)? He gives us new hearts that are soft and pliable to him. How does God do this "heart surgery (Romans 2:29)?" Circumcises (changes) our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom we receive when accept Christ. When did you have "heart surgery" (John 3:5-7)?
- ♥ What shape is your heart in right now: 1) Like a piece of granite? 2) Being broken up by some hard blows? 3) Being softened by the steady "rain" of the Spirit? 4) Other? How would describe the difference between a *hard heart* and a *soft heart*? How can you tell what kind of heart you have?
- ♥ What does Yahweh promise in 36:25? **Cleansing from sin**. 1 John 1:9 tells us that if we confess our sins (own up to what we have done and make no excuses), God promises to *forgive* our sins and *cleanse* (purify) us from all unrighteousness. What is the difference between forgiveness and cleaning? Why are both important? **Forgiveness** restores our relationship with God that was broken by

the sin. Forgiveness means that the sin no longer stand between God and us – preventing intimacy and stunting spiritual growth. Forgiveness “clears the air” between us and God, breaking down walls that were between us which hinder further healing and heart work in us. **Cleansing** is for the reversal of the damage that the sin has done in our heart. Cleansing is heart healing. It reverses the negative effects that the sin had on us. Cleaning is freedom from the sin and the hold it had over us. Cleansing washes our hearts and makes us clean again; it is a fresh start. Together, forgiveness and cleansing releases us from the power and grip of sin, so that, once again God is no impeded in working all things together for good in our lives. Sin is death, forgiveness and cleansing are life. When we **receive** God’s forgiveness and cleansing we are washed clean and set free and in God’s eyes, it is as if what happened, never happened. Forgiveness and cleansing reverses the irreversible.

The name *Yahweh Shammah* is a promise of God's presence. In the Old Testament, God's glory resided in the temple in Israel and individuals could know, through prayer and worship, God's protection, care and guidance. The Holy Spirit, however, did not live in the hearts of individuals and only came upon a person temporarily at special times, enabling them for special tasks. New Testament believers, however, can experience God in much more personal and intimate ways because of the Incarnation of Jesus – *Immanuel*, God *with us* – and the gift of the Holy Spirit who was given at Pentecost (**Acts 2**) to *dwell* in individual hearts.

4. Read the following Scriptures and note anything you learn about *God's presence with us*.

John 14:2-3, 16-17, 26 –

Jesus’ physically left earth at his Ascension into heaven where he has gone to prepare a place for us where he will some day take us when he comes back for his own. But, in his physical absence, the Father has sent God the Holy Spirit – our Counselor, the Spirit of truth – who will be with us forever. We can intimately know the Holy Spirit because he lives in us and will always be with us. It is the Spirit’s job to teach us all things and to remind us what Jesus has said in his Word.

- ♥ What are some ways you experience or recognize the Holy Spirit in your life? How aware are you of his constant presence? What can you do to become more aware of his presence?
- ♥ What does it mean to you that the Holy Spirit will be with you forever, living with you and never leaving? Do you sense his presence in some way or do you just accept it by faith? How so?

John 14:18-20; 15:4-5 –

When Jesus left earth, he promised not to abandon his followers, but instead to come to them by his Spirit. In fact, Father, Son and Holy Spirit all live in and with the believer in a very close and intimate relationship – Jesus is in the Father, we are in Jesus and Jesus is in us. Jesus offers us his presence, but we must remain or abide in him, just as he remains or abides in us. His Presence with us and our staying vitally connected to his Presence is very important because we can do nothing of spiritual consequence with a connection to him.

- ♥ How do you "see" Jesus (**14:18**) as you live life? What do you do to remain (abide) in him (**15:4-5**)? When are you most likely to do something with Jesus (**15:5**)? Without Jesus? What fruit do you see in your life because of Christ's presence with you?
- ♥ Try to visualize **John 14:20**. What comes to mind? Share a time when you were vividly aware of God's presence with you. How would your life be different if you were constantly aware of God's presence?
- ♥ What practical difference does it make in your life that God is always with you? What would be different if he wasn't always with you – either "coming and going" or just "viewing you" from heaven?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 –

The Holy Spirit not only lives in us, but our bodies are considered to be his temple. A temple is the place where we worship God and it is kept sacred, clean and holy because God is holy and pure. **All** parts of us belong to God – heart, spirit, soul, mind and body. We may think of our body as belonging to us and that we can do with it what we wish. This, however is not true. Our bodies have been purchased with the life-blood of Christ and we are to use our bodies to honor God.

- ♥ What does the word temple suggest (6:19)? How does it make you feel to know that you do not belong to yourself, but belong to God? What implications does this have in your life?
- ♥ How at home are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in your life? Are they more like owners or temporary guests? How can you honor God with your body? How important is this to you? Why?

Ephesians 2:19-22; Matthew 18:20 –

Not only is God's presence with us individually, but as the body of Christ, we are joined together into one household or body where God lives by his Spirit. A group of Christ-followers is much more than a group of people getting together. When we come together as the body of Christ, Jesus promises to be with us with his Presence. When we gather as the community of Christ, the fruit of Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness gentleness, faithfulness and self-control should be evident and noticeable, especially to those who don't know Jesus.

- ♥ What is the significance of the word "household" or "family" in **Ephesians 2:19**? What do these verses say to you about the importance of gathering with other believers? Have you experienced Jesus' presence when you have been with other believers? If so, how?
 - ♥ Imagine one day of your life without God in it. What specific blessings would be withdrawn if he was not with you? How can you become more aware of his presence with you?
5. Ezekiel's vision of a future city named *Yahweh Shammah – The LORD Is There* was the model of another city that another prophet of God saw in a vision hundreds of years later. Read **Revelation 21:1-4, 22-27** and **Revelation 22:1-5** which is a description of the *new Jerusalem* where the bride of Christ will live with God forever. In the space below make a note of anything having to do with *God's presence with his people in this new city*.

In the new Jerusalem, God will be with us and live with us forever. We will be his people and he will be our God. He will wipe every tear from our eyes and there will be no more sorrow or death. We will not need to go to the temple to worship God, for his IS the temple and will always be with us as we worship him in person. His presence will be with us in his Light and Glory, which gives light to the whole new creation. We will worship and serve God and Jesus at their throne. We will see God face to face (deep intimacy) and his mark of belonging will on us forever and we will reign with him over the new heaven and the new earth forever and ever!

- ♥ How does it make you feel that God wants to be with you, not only in this life, but for all eternity?
- ♥ If you belong to Jesus (21:27), how does it make you feel to know that this is the place that Jesus has gone to prepare for you (**John 14:2**)? What, in this description is most meaningful to you? Why?
- ♥ What do you think it means that the *Lord God Almighty and the Lamb* are the temple of this city (21:22)? Where do you see the presence of the Holy Spirit in this city? **Jesus called the Holy Spirit the springs of living water and the river of life. The Holy Spirit's presence is seen in the "river of the water of life , as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city."**
- ♥ What do you think the *new earth* will be like (21:1)? How might you serve and reign in this new earth (22:3, 5)? What are the implications of seeing Jesus' face (22:4; **1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2**)?

Some believe that the new earth will be the great restoration of our earth, restored and renewed to be the creation God first created it to be before sin "ruined" it.

Romans 8:19-22 (New Living Translation)

19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Surely we will discover, explore and enjoy this new earth – and reign over it just as God intended from the beginning. We will be intimately involved with Jesus – seeing him as he really is – and having a glorified body just as he has. If we really meditate on the wonderfulness of the new heaven and new earth and all the joy and pleasure that awaits us – truly, the cry of our hearts should be, "I can't wait!"

BELOW IS THE SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURE FOR THIS LESSON THAT CAN BE PRINTED OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME

NIV

Romans 2:29 No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

John 3:5-7 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. **6** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. **7** You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— **17** the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:18-20 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. **19** Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **20** On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

John 15:4-5 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

1Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **21** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

1Corinthians 13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

1John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

NLT

Romans 2:29 No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not a cutting of the body but a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. Whoever has that kind of change seeks praise from God, not from people.

John 3:5-7 Jesus replied, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. **6** Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven. **7** So don't be surprised at my statement that you must be born again.

1John 1:9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.

John 14:2-3 There are many rooms in my Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. **3** When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. **17** He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world at large cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you do, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.

26 But when the Father sends the Counselor as my representative—and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I myself have told you.

John 14:18-20 No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. **19** In just a little while the world will not see me again, but you will. For I will live again, and you will, too. **20** When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

John 15:4-5 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from me.

5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

1Corinthians 6:19-20 Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself,

20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

Ephesians 2:19-22 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. **20** We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. **21** We who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. **22** Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them."

1Corinthians 13:12 Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now.

1John 3:2 Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.