

Facilitator Notes for "Knowing God by Name"

Lesson 6 – EL OLAM – Most High God –Genesis 21:22-34

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

Questions

Read **Genesis 21:22-34**. Make note of the name *Eternal God*.

1. **Genesis 21:22-34** portrays one short incident in Abraham's long life. From these verses, what do you learn about **Abraham**, his **life** and his **God**?

It was obvious to others that God had blessed Abraham and was with everything he did - v. 22
Abraham was not a citizen of the country in which was living (land of the Philistines), nor did he own land – v. 23, 25

The king or ruler of the country came to him, seeking a treaty. Thus we know that Abraham must have evidenced great wealth and numbers in his household. He could have been a threat is he so desired. – v. 23

Abraham was looking to stay for a while in this place and so dug a well (something that took a great deal of time and effort), but the servants of King Abimelech had seized the well – v. 25

Abraham and Abimelech make a treaty so that Abraham can stay in this place v. 31

Abraham planted a tree and called on the name of the Lord, the Eternal God – v. 33

Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time v. 34

2. The course of Abraham's life before this incident is important. In the chart below, trace Abraham's movements over the previous years.

	Abraham's Movements
Genesis 11:31	Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldeans, but left with his father Terah and his household to go to the land of Canaan – but stopped and settled in Haran
Genesis 12:1, 4-6	God called Abraham to leave his home country, his relatives and go to the “land that God would show him.” He obeyed and set up camp in an area inhabited by Canaanites.
Genesis 12:8-10	Abraham again moved on – by stages – stopping and worshipping as he went. Because of a famine, he went to Egypt and lived there for a while.
Genesis 13:1-4, 18	Abraham left Egypt, back to Canaan. He had become wealthy in livestock and silver and gold. He went from place to place , stopping for a while and then moving on. Finally he moved to live near the great trees of Mamre – where he build an altar to God. (It was here that Isaac was born)
Genesis 20:1	He again moved to the place where he came in contact with Abimelech

- ♥ How would you describe Abraham's life after God called him to leave his home country? **He was a nomad with no permanent home and owning no land.** If you were a member of Abraham's household, what would have been your reaction to Abraham's lifestyle? Why?
- ♥ What events in your life, if any, make you identify with Abraham's life? What are things in your life that always seem to be in flux? How does this make you feel?
- ♥ What, in your life, gives you a sense of *security* and *place*? How important are these things to you? How willing would you be to give these things up if God called you to do so? What does your answer reveal about you and your relationship to God?

3. What was God's promise to Abraham in **Genesis 13:14-17**? According to **Hebrews 11:8-9**, why was Abraham willing to live as a stranger in the land that God had promised to him?

God told Abraham to look around at the land he was in and then he promised to give it to him and his descendent forever. Abraham did not own this land at the time – nor would he in his lifetime. He wandered as a foreigner in the land that God called him to and promised to him until his death

– even buying a small piece of land as a burial place for he and Sarah. But, Abraham believed God’s “delayed promise” to him and he lived his life in faith, living as if God’s promise were true and already fulfilled. Hebrews tells us that he made his home in this place that God had promised him, but had not yet given him. Because of his relationship with God and the faith and trust he had in God’s character and promises, he believed and lived as if the promise was already fulfilled, knowing for sure that God would keep his word in his own time and way.

- ♥ What does all this say about Abraham and his relationship to God? Do you think Abraham is a "special case" or do you think God wants everyone to live this way? How so?
 - ♥ How do you react to "delayed" promises? How do you handle "waiting?" How do you think God views delayed promises and waiting? God sees all his promises as already fulfilled. That is why we can live as if we have already received what God has promised. It is not a matter of “if”, but “when.” Just like Abraham, we can experience God’s love a presence as we wait. How can his perspective help you when you are waiting?
 - ♥ How was God faithful to Abraham as he waited for the fulfillment of God's promise (21:22)? God was with him and helped him in everything he did while he was waiting. Sometimes we think that life doesn’t begin or things aren’t good until we see and experience all that God has promised us. But more important than God’s promises is his Presence. He is with us, loves us and blesses us even as we wait. Waiting is never wasted time as far as God is concerned – and should not be for us either. What does this reveal about God? About waiting?
4. In view of what you have learned about Abraham's life so far in this lesson, why was the incident with Abimelech (uh BIM uh lek) (21:22-34) and the agreement they reached important to Abraham? The treaty that Abraham made with Abimelech allowed him to settle down, stop wandering for a while and make a “home” in the land of the Philistines by the well he had dug. The sense of “home” and “place” is something that God has built into us and he knows that we need it. “Home” is one of God’s good gifts to us.
5. What did Abraham do after he reached an agreement with Abimelech (21:33)? He planted a tamarisk tree and called on the Name of the Lord – the Eternal God.

This is the first time in scripture that the name *El Olam - The Eternal God* is used. Review the meaning of *El Olam* in the *Introduction*. Why do you think Abraham called on and worshipped the *Eternal God* at this **time** and this **place**?

Abraham’s life was of picture of instability and change. In order to follow God’s call on his life, he was uprooted and his life restructured. He left his own civilization for a foreign land. He left a place of culture to move to the backward home of wanderers. He left his home to take up residence in a tent. He left stability for the uncertainty of travel and changing circumstances. He left the security of an established code of laws to wander from land to land, subject to the whims of various kings and rulers.

After years of wandering, Abraham is looking for a place to “settle” -- where he could live for a time as his flocks could rested and flourished and where he could experience some permanence and stability. Yet even here in Beersheba, where he dug a well in order to settle for awhile, the locals tried to run him off. But God, knowing what he needed, provided for him through the treaty with Abimelech and Abraham was able to experience the stability and security he needed.

Even though Abraham’s circumstances were often uncertain, he saw God as stable, trustworthy, unchanging and eternal. God was Abraham’s security and stability, not his circumstances. Abraham saw God beyond time and place, with eternal purposes – and he put his trust in and worshipped the Eternal God – the One who never changes and the One who would always take care of him. Life and circumstances are always temporary and changing. God is permanent, reliable, dependable, constant and lasting. Because he is eternal, he is also trustworthy.

- ♥ What images come to mind when you think of the *Eternal God* or *Everlasting God*? How do you picture God being *outside of* and *beyond* time? What connection do you see between God being *eternal* (timeless) and *unchanging*? **Time does not change God and time has no effect on God's being, character, purposes or promises.** How do these two characteristics work together? **Time is what changes things and things change over time. Because God is outside time, time does not limit or change him in any way. Time is finite and God is infinite.**
 - ♥ The word "promise" implies something not yet received. How does knowing that God is *eternal* and *unchanging* help you trust God's promises? **Time will not change God's promises to us and since God is outside of time, his promises are already fulfilled even though we may not have received them yet IN time.** What promise(s) are you believing now?
 - ♥ Do you *live* and *act* as if God's promises are an "if" or a "when?" How so? What is the difference between these two positions? We can live What difference would living from each position make in everyday life?
6. A **tamarisk tree (21:33)** is a large, long-living tree that grows in sandy soil producing rich, green foliage that provide grazing for animals and shade from the heat of the sun. What is symbolic about Abraham planting this tree? What statement was he making to God, himself and others?
- A tree is not a fast growing plant and it takes years for it to mature and provide foliage and shade. By planting the tree, Abraham was investing in the future. He was planning on being able to stay and live on the land that God had promised him. Planting the tree was a statement that Abraham believed God's promise to him and it symbolized a fertile and prosperous future – and also God's eternal nature and promises. Planting the tree was a statement of faith that God had provided for him and would continue to provide for him.**
- ♥ What connection do you see between Abraham planting a tree on land that was promised him, but did not yet belong to him and his calling on and worshipping *El Olam* – the *Eternal God* whose character, promises and purposes never change? **The planting of the tree was a statement that he believed that land that God promised him would be his someday – and that he was trusting God to give it to him in the future.** What is the significance of the statement in **22:34**? **God did provide for Abraham by arranging circumstances that allowed him to live on the land that would one day belong to his descendents. He was able to reap the benefits of the tree he planted.**
 - ♥ Have you ever commemorated a significant encounter with God or an important spiritual milestone with a physical act (like Abraham planting a tree) or displaying some token that helps you remember and celebrate what God has done for you? What is the value in doing something like this? Discuss with your small group some ways this could be done.

Eternal God – The implications of God being **eternal, unchanging** and thus **everywhere present at all times** is mind-boggling and certainly more than we can address in this lesson. However, there are some very useful things we can note about **God and his relationship to time** that will help us in our understanding and our relationship to *El Olam* – *Eternal God*. Below are some facts and observations that may be helpful in your insights about the *Eternal God*.

- God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments (time) in his own being. God's life is from within himself and not from anything that had a beginning in the space-time world (**Psalm 90:2**).
- Although God is not limited by space and time (the succession of passing moments), he created the world to have space and time. God fills space and time with his presence and gives it purpose and value. He uses time to act and accomplish his purposes.
- Before God made the universe, there was no matter. The science of physics tells us that matter, time and space must all occur together: if there is no matter, there can be no space or time either. Before God created the universe there was no time (the succession of passing moments); so, when God created the universe, he also created time. Time, therefore, does not have existence in itself, but, like the rest of creation depends on God's eternal being and power to keep it going.
- God transcends time; he is beyond the range or limit of time. God stands above time and is able to see it all as present in his consciousness. He is present at all times in all places and acts in time and space.

- **2 Peter 3:8** says: *With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.* It is often difficult for us to remember events that happened some time ago; we remember recent events more vividly. However, in God's perspective, any extremely long period of time (since creation, for example) seems to just have occurred. And any very short period of time (such as one day) seems to God to last forever: it never ceases to be "present" in his consciousness. Thus, God sees and knows all events past, present, and future with equal vividness.
- Time does not affect God like it does humans; it does not change him in any way. The universe is constantly undergoing a transition from one stage to another and human existence is marked by continual changes and growth. With God, however, there is no change. He is not evolving from one stage to another. He is the same yesterday, today and forever (**Hebrews 13:8**).
- The importance of God's changelessness can be seen if we imagine that God *could* change. If God *could* change, any change would be for the **better** or the **worse**. If God changed for the better, then he was not *the best possible God* when we first trusted him. How could we be sure he is the best possible God now? If he could change for the worse, then what kind of God might he become over time? Might he not change from a little bit evil to wholly evil? How could we ever trust a God who could change? How could we ever commit our lives and our future to him? We couldn't!
- ♥ For you, which of the above facts were most informative? Surprising? Helpful? Discuss with your small group what you learned and what you appreciate about the *Eternal, Unchanging God*.
- ♥ What would be the personal implications for you if God *plans* and *purposes* for the universe and eternity changed over time? What impact would it have on you if his *promises* changed over time?
- ♥ How does seeing God's eternal, unchanging nature affect your perception of time and eternity and your place in it? Unlike God, you had a beginning. Will you have an end? **Hebrews 5:9; 2 Peter 1:10-11**

Obviously, our bodies will someday die and this life will come to an end – but the Bible teaches that there is life after physical death. A person will continue to live either in God's eternal kingdom (salvation is eternal) or apart from God in eternal punishment (Matt 25:46).

7. Fill in the chart below to learn about God's eternal qualities. After reading the reference, write what it is about God that is *eternal* and *unchanging* (his **person**, his **plans** and **purposes**, his **promises**, his **love**, his **kingdom**, etc.) and then consider and make note of what this truth means to you personally.

Reference	God's Eternal, Unchanging Quality	Personal Application
Psalm 135:13	your <u>name</u> and your <u>renown</u> or <u>fame</u> (being known and talked about)	Everything I am learning about your Names will always be true – I can depend and rely on who you are – always! There will always be people who know you – I never have to follow you alone; I can always learn from others
Psalm 145:13	Your kingdom and dominion (rule) are eternal – enduring through all generations.	God will always be king and will always rule over all exists. I don't have to wonder about what will happen when his "term of office" is over; He will be the same King to my children and children's children, etc. as he is to me
Psalm 33:11 Proverbs 19:21	Your plans, purposes and intentions stay the same forever	I don't have to be concerned that you might change things what you are doing and how you are doing it. People's plans and purposes often change – but not yours.
Psalm 100:5	Your unfailing love and faithfulness continues forever	This gives me great security. You are not going to ever change how you feel about me and you will always be faithful to our relationship.
Deuteronomy 33:27a	You are eternal and your "arms" are everlasting	I can dwell and take refuge in your eternal being and your care, and support of me will never end.
Isaiah 40:28-29	You are the everlasting God	Because You are everlasting, you never grow tired or weary like I do. You understand all things and you will always give me the strength and power I need.

Isaiah 26:4	You are the ETERNAL rock	A rock is solid, stable, dependable and safe. You will always be these things to me.
Numbers 23:19	You will not lie or change your mind about your purposes; what you say you will do, you WILL do	This gives me absolute security in my relationship to you. I can count on you to do what you say you will do. I don't ever have to wonder if you will keep your word.
James 1:17 Hebrews 13:8	You do not change like shifting shadows	I can count on you to always be the same; you do not change over time like people do
Revelation 1:8	You are the beginning and the end of all things; who you were is who you are and is who you will always be	Your power, sovereignty and control is over all of human history. There is nothing that is or was or will ever be – that you do not know completely.

- ♥ Which of the above qualities or traits about God is most meaningful to you? Why?
- ♥ Because God is eternal and unchanging, our relationship with him can be secure and reliable. Read **John 15:9-17**. What do you learn about friendship with God? How is it different than your other relationships? Do you have this kind of friendship with Jesus? If not, how could you?
- ♥ Write a prayer to thank and praise God for his **permanence, changelessness, reliability** and **security**.

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

NIV

Genesis 11:31 Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.

Genesis 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

Genesis 12:4-6 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. **5** He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. **6** Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

Genesis 12:8-10 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

9 Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev. **10** Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

Genesis 13:1-4, 18 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. **2** Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

3 From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier **4** and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD.

18 So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.

Genesis 20:1 Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar,

Genesis 13:14-17 The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. **15** All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. **16** I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. **17** Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you."

Hebrews 11:8-9 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance,

obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. **9** By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

Hebrews 5:9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

2Peter 1:10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, **11** and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Psalms 135:13 Your name, O LORD, endures forever, your renown, O LORD, through all generations.

Psalms 145:13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.

Psalms 33:11 But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

Psalms 100:5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Deuteronomy 33:27a The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Isaiah 40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. **29** He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Isaiah 26:4 Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Revelation 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

John 15:9-17 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **10** If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **12** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command. **15** I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. **17** This is my command: Love each other.

Genesis 11:31 Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai, and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and left Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But they stopped instead at the village of Haran and settled there.

Genesis 12:1 Then the LORD told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you.

Genesis 12:4 So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. **5** He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people who had joined his household at Haran—and finally arrived in Canaan. **6** Traveling through Canaan, they came to a place near Shechem and set up camp beside the oak at Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

Genesis 12:8 After that, Abram traveled southward and set up camp in the hill country between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar and worshiped the LORD. **9** Then Abram traveled south by stages toward the Negev.

Genesis 12:10 At that time there was a severe famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to wait it out.

Genesis 13:1 So they left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev—Abram with his wife and Lot and all that they owned, **2** for Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold. **3** Then they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where they had camped before. **4** This was the place where Abram had built the altar, and there he again worshiped the LORD.

Genesis 13:18 Then Abram moved his camp to the oak grove owned by Mamre, which is at Hebron. There he built an altar to the LORD.

Genesis 20:1 Now Abraham moved south to the Negev and settled for a while between Kadesh and Shur at a place called Gerar.

Genesis 13:14 After Lot was gone, the LORD said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction. **15** I am going to give all this land to you and your offspring as a permanent possession. **16** And I am going to give you so many descendants that, like dust, they cannot be counted! **17** Take a walk in every direction and explore the new possessions I am giving you."

Hebrews 11:8 It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. **9** And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in a tent. And so did Isaac and Jacob, to whom God gave the same promise.

Hebrews 5:9 In this way, God qualified him as a perfect High Priest, and he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him.

2Peter 1:10 So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Doing this, you will never stumble or fall away. **11** And God will open wide the gates of heaven for you to enter into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Psalms 135:13 Your name, O LORD, endures forever; your fame, O LORD, is known to every generation.

Psalms 145:13 For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule generation after generation. The LORD is faithful in all he says; he is gracious in all he does.

Psalms 33:11 But the LORD's plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken.

Proverbs 19:21 You can make many plans, but the LORD's purpose will prevail.

Psalms 100:5 For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

Deuteronomy 33:27 The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you. He thrusts out the enemy before you; it is he who cries, "Destroy them!"

Isaiah 40:28 Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. **29** He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak.

Isaiah 26:4 Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock.

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie. He is not a human, that he should change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?

James 1:17 Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven's lights. Unlike them, he never changes or casts shifting shadows.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Revelation 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come, the Almighty One."

John 15:9 "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. **10** When you obey me, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father and remain in his love.

11 I have told you this so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! **12** I command you to love each other in the same way that I love you. **13** And here is how to measure it—the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends. **14** You are my friends if you obey me. **15** I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn't confide in his servants. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. **16** You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. **17** I command you to love each other.