



Knowing God by Name

Lesson 5 ~ El Elyon – Most High God

Daniel 4

♥ Heart Talk

When you meet with your small group, share something about your continued experience of **being silent for 5 minutes before God** OR share something about the **Heart Therapy Exercises from Lesson 3 or 4**; *writing a personal prayer of trust to God, declaring your intention to trust him completely or choosing a particular promise from Scripture that you need and personalizing it by **proclaiming, praying, praising and placing your trust in it.*** How do these exercises help you *experience* God? What did you sense God is teaching you?

Introduction

The Hebrew name *El Elyon* (el el-YOHN) is translated **Most High God** in English. We have learned so far in this course that the word *El*, when used in God's name, means **powerful** and **mighty**. Notice that the word *El* is used twice in *El Elyon*, an indication of God's supreme power and might. *Elyon* means "*highest or exalted one*" and the Bible teaches us that there is no power or authority higher than the **Most High God**.

Another way to describe God's superior authority is to say that God is **sovereign**, which means that God is the independent, supreme ruler of the universe. *El Elyon* brought the universe into existence by his power and design. He governs, with power and authority, over our world and history itself. He will bring it to a close in his time and his way. Nothing will thwart his ultimate plans and purposes, for he is **God Most High**.

♥ Heart Preparation

Be still, and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10). The Message paraphrases this verse as, *Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God.* God cannot show himself to us when we are living fast-paced lives that include little **quietness** or **silence**. By learning to be still before God, even for a very short period of time, we make space to see, hear and experience God's goodness to us.

Before you begin this lesson – and to prepare your heart to receive what God has for you – **sit quietly before God, in silence, for 5 minutes.** (It might be helpful to set a timer so you can focus on God and not the passing of time.) During this time, don't try to accomplish anything other than just being quiet with God. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to focus on God, saying something like, *Here I am, Lord or I belong to you, God.* **Try to do this exercise of silence one other time during the week.** We are trying to cultivate a **quiet heart** before God so that we can **sense his Presence and hear his words spoken to our hearts** in spite of the **noise** and **distractions** of life. Don't underestimate the value of this exercise!

Jesus' Encouraging Words to You . . .

Accept each day just as it comes to you, remembering that I am sovereign over your life. Rejoice in this day that I have made, trusting that I am abundantly present in it. Instead of regretting or resenting the way things are, thank Me in all circumstances. Trust Me and don't be fearful; thank Me and rest in My sovereignty.

Jesus Calling (October 7) by Sarah Young

A Prayer to Help Prepare Your Heart

*Write your blessed Name, O Lord, upon my heart,
there to remain so indelibly engraved,
that no prosperity, no adversity shall ever move me from your love.
Be to me a strong tower of defense, a comforter in tribulation,
a deliverer in distress, a very present help in trouble,
and a guide to heaven through the many temptations and dangers of this life.*

Thomas á Kempis
1380-1471

Questions

Background - The *Book of Daniel* relates the experiences and visions of a Jewish captive, **Daniel**, taken from Judah to Babylon as a young man. Daniel was trained to be an administrator in **King Nebuchadnezzar's** vast empire and for over 60 years, he remained influential in the government of the **Babylonian Empire**, as well as the **Persian Empire** that followed it. The main theme of the *Book of Daniel* is God's **absolute sovereignty** over all the kingdoms of the earth and over history itself. **Nothing** and **no one** is outside of God's control. Through Daniel's life experiences and his prophecies about future world events, we see that God is truly in control of all things.

Nebuchadnezzar, mighty king of the Babylonian Empire captured Jerusalem in 586 B.C., destroyed the temple and carried the people of Judah into captivity to Babylon. He was a proud and arrogant king who conducted many building projects, including temples, fortifications and the "Hanging Gardens of Babylon," one of the *seven ancient wonders of the world*. **Daniel 4** records a public decree that King Nebuchadnezzar wrote toward the end of his life **after** he had an incredible encounter with *El Elyon - Most High God*.

Read **Daniel 4:1-18**. Underline any occurrence of **Most High**.

1. To whom is Nebuchadnezzar writing his decree and what is his purpose (**4:1-3**)?

♥ Nebuchadnezzar is going to share his "God Story." Why do we share with others what God has done for us? Who benefits from this? What "God Story" could you share?

2. Nebuchadnezzar's vision or dream has two parts. Record the important details of each part.

4:10-12

4:13-16

♥ Who gave Nebuchadnezzar this dream and for what purpose (**4:17**)? Why is this important information for everyone to know? What does this information mean to you personally?

♥ Why do you think God chose to communicate with Nebuchadnezzar through a dream rather than by some other means, such as a prophet? What does this reveal about God?

♥ From beginning to end, the Bible is full of stories of God communicating to people through dreams and visions. Can God speak to people today through dreams and visions? Does he? Why or why not?

Read **Daniel 4:19-27**. Underline any occurrence of **Most High**.

3. What was going to happen to Nebuchadnezzar and why (**4:24-26**)?

♥ What do you think was God's motivation in giving Nebuchadnezzar this dream? What heart change did God desire in Nebuchadnezzar? Why was this important for Nebuchadnezzar? For us?

♥ What are some reasons why God warned Nebuchadnezzar ahead of time of what would happen to him (**4:27**)? What does this reveal about God? Have you ever received a "warning" or "wake-up call" from God? Did you heed it? What happened?

♥ What "tree" of yours has been cut down to size? Was God behind it or something else? What resulted?

Read **Daniel 4:28-33**. Underline any occurrence of *Most High*.

4. What, specifically, was Nebuchadnezzar's sin and why was it wrong (**4:30**)?

- ♥ Why does God require that we acknowledge him as Most High God with power and authority over everything and everyone? Is this acknowledgement for God or for us? How so?
- ♥ How does one actually acknowledge that God is Most High with power and authority over everything and everyone? Are words enough? Why or why not? How can we *live* this acknowledgement?
- ♥ What describes you more – *self-reliant* or *God-reliant*? On what do you base your conclusion?
- ♥ Identify who or what is *Most High* in your life. What do you think about, dream about, desire? On what do you spend most of your time? How do you acknowledge God with what he has given you?

Read **Daniel 4:34-37**. Underline any occurrence of *Most High* or *King of heaven*.

5. Describe Nebuchadnezzar's heart change. What specific *attitude adjustments* do you see?

- ♥ What was Nebuchadnezzar's problem (**4:37**)? Why is pride so dangerous? Why does God condemn it? From **Proverbs 3:11-12**, what comfort can we take if we are humbled by God?
 - ♥ How have you ever taken credit for God's blessings – your education or career, your gifts and abilities, your well-behaved/beautiful children, your spouse or marriage, your material possessions, etc.?
 - ♥ Compared to the rest of the world, we in America live in a land of plenty. How do the good things in your life interfere with letting God be *Most High* in your life?
6. Consider the verses where you underlined *Most High* or *King of heaven* (**4:2-3; 17, 24-25, 32, 34-35, 37**). From these verses, record all you learned about *El Elyon*. Make note of his *power, actions* and *character*.

- ♥ How does it make you feel to know that God is sovereign, having complete power and authority over everything and everyone? Is this a comforting thought? Why or why not?
 - ♥ What are the things about *El Elyon* that attract you and for which you are immediately grateful? What are some things about *El Elyon* that give you pause? Why?
 - ♥ What difference does it make that everything *El Elyon* – **Most High God** does *is right and that all his ways are just* (**4:37**)? What if this were not true of God?
7. **Pride** is taking credit for what is God's and **humility** is seeing ourselves in right perspective to God and others. Nebuchadnezzar learned first-hand that God will *humble the proud* (**4:37**), but that is not God's first choice. According to **1 Peter 5:6**, what is God's preference?

- ♥ What does **1 Peter 5:6** practically mean? How do you see it working? Why is this a better solution?

♥ What does God promise the humble (**Psalms 18:27; 25:9; 149:4; Proverbs 3:34; Isaiah 66:2**)?

Acknowledging God as *sovereign over all*, with all authority and power over everything and everyone can be a **sobering** truth if we have a tendency to be self-reliant or proud. However, it can also be a very **comforting** truth if we are in need of **security, protection, justice**, or are in the midst of **suffering**. Even when things seem to go very wrong, God is in control and nothing will thwart his ultimate plans and purposes. There is no wrong or evil that is more powerful than *El Elyon - Most High God*. There is no person or heart he can't change and no circumstance he can't use for his purposes and work for good in your life. **Nothing** is impossible for the *Most High God*. **All things** are *always* under his control. We may not see where our circumstances are leading or how it will all turn out - but God does! And he promises to keep us *safe* and *secure* in the meantime. We are protected by *Most High God*!

8. Read **Psalm 91:1-4**. What do these verses promise the one who puts their trust in the power of the *Most High*? (**91:1** includes two names for God; *Most High* = *Elyon* and *Almighty* = *Shaddai*.)

♥ Where does your security lie? What, in your life, makes you feel secure? What if it were all stripped away? Would God be enough for you? Why or why not?

♥ If God were not in control, who or what could be? What difference would this make in your life?

9. Read **Psalm 91:9-11, 14-16**. We are given many promises if we make the *Most High* our dwelling or refuge. Which of these promises do you find particularly comforting? Why?

♥ Our life can be filled with problems - financial insecurity, ill health, a difficult job, a troubled marriage, rebellious or unbelieving children - to name a few. What troubles and worries do you have? What does it mean for you that God has power and authority over all things and all people?

♥ Consider the affairs of our country and our world. What troubles you? What potential danger do you see? What comfort do you take in knowing that *El Elyon - Most High God* is in control?

Optional: The life story of Joseph, found in Genesis, is an example of God being in control, even in adverse circumstances. Joseph was kidnapped by his brothers, beaten, left for dead and sold into slavery. Then he was unjustly accused and imprisoned for years, separated from home and family. Yet, it all this, God was in control and working. Read **Genesis 39:2-4, 21-23; 45:1-9; 50:18-21**. How did the *Most High God* work in Joseph's life even when things were going "wrong"? How does this encourage you? Do you really believe that *El Elyon* is in control?

♥ Is there anything in your life that holds a higher place than the *Most High God*? Ask him how you can make him "Most High" in your heart as he is *Most High* in heaven and on earth.

♥ Heart Therapy

In the new Testament, Jesus is called the **Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32)** and the Holy Spirit is called the **power of the Most High (Luke 1:35)** - and we can be **children of the Most High!**

Read **Luke 6:27-36**.

♥ What is the motivation for this kind of "risky" behavior toward those who don't treat you well (**6:35-36**)?

♥ What could "go wrong" if you followed Jesus' commands in these verses?

♥ When has God treated *you* this way? How does this motivate you in your treatment of others?

♥ What have you learned in this lesson about *El Elyon - Most High God*, the One who has power and authority over everything and everyone, that can help you engage in this "risky" behavior?

♥ What value do you put on being a child of the *Most High*, acting just like your Father?