

The

GOD

We Can Know

EXPLORING THE "I AM" SAYINGS OF JESUS

LENT BIBLE STUDY

7:00 PM

FELLOWSHIP HALL & ZOOM

MARCH 8, 15, 22, 29 APRIL 5

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The God We Can Know

“Let us occupy ourselves entirely in knowing God. The more we know [God] the more we will desire to know [God].”

- Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*

How do you know somebody?

How do you know God?

What do you know about God?

God Wants to Be Recognized

God doesn't avoid us. God is not hiding. God wants to be known.

+God comes looking for Adam and Eve.

+God came to Abraham for a relationship.

+God came to prophets to speak God's message: "I want to be recognized by you."

+God came in Jesus Christ to be known.

None of this means it's always EASY to recognize God's presence. But God likes being recognized. God is always in motion coming our way. God can be known.

I AM

The next four weeks, we'll be looking at "I AM" statements of Jesus. These "I AM" statements identify Jesus with the God of Moses - the God we can know and who wants to know us. Tonight, we'll go to the original "I AM."

What is in a name? What does your name mean?

Read Exodus 3:1-14.

Why was knowing God's name so important to Moses?

What message is God sending Moses by telling God's name?

I AM

Egyptians believed names possessed magical powers. Knowing one's name transferred some of the namesake's authority.

Background: Pharaoh - most powerful man in the world. Calling for release of slaves would sound like lunacy. Moses had not been in Egypt since he fled for his life after murdering an Egyptian soldier. Returning to demand the release of God's people was very, very risky.

Moses had numerous excuses: "I am not respected / I am not eloquent / I am not brave / I don't even know your name."

God's answer? "I will be there."

YHWH

What is the name of God? The sound of breathing?

In his Nooma video, Breathe, Rob Bell wonders what this means in key moments like when a baby is born – newly arrived on planet earth, must they take their first breath, or rather speak the name of God if they are to be alive here? On our deathbed, do we breathe our last breath? Or is it that we cease to be alive when the name of God is no longer on our lips?

The most ironic of his questions is also the most beautiful: he wonders about the moment when an atheist friend looks across the table at you and says, “there. is. no. God”. And of course what you hear is “Yod. He. Vav. He.”

YHWH

Translations of YHWH:

I AM who I AM.

I was who I was / I am who I am / I will be who I will be.

Everett Fox: “I will be there howsoever I will be there.”

Moses seeks assurance that he will have what it takes. God’s answer? I will be there. You need me more than power and ability. Let that be enough.

Michael Jr & Moses story

I AM Sayings

Just as I AM would be with Moses, so Jesus vows to be with us.

Gail R. O'Day: "The 'I Am' sayings...use symbols that come from the common fund of ancient Near Eastern religious and human experience. Through these common symbols, Jesus declares that people's religious needs and human longings are met in him."

Jesus talks about these things in relation to their opposites: light vs darkness, good shepherd vs hireling, true vine vs false one. Jesus is an answer for hunger, darkness, fear, emptiness, and so forth.

What does it mean that Jesus associates himself with symbols like bread, light, shepherding, a grapevine, a way, and so forth?

I AM → We are?

+I am the Light of the world (John 8:12); YOU are the Light of the world (Matt 5:14)

+I am the Good Shepherd (John 10:11); Feed my sheep (John 21:17)

+I am the True Vine (John 15:1); You are the branches (John 15:5)

+I am the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6); his followers were known as belonging to the Way (Acts 9:2)

+I am the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25); promised us life abundant (John 10:10)

What each of these statements claims about God, it also claims about us.

I AM → We are?

Getting to know God means getting to know ourselves. The more we know who God is the more we know who we are.

Phillip Newell: We are not just made by God; we are made *out of* God.

I am not just made by God, I am made out of God.

I am...(list six characteristics.)

God is...(list six characteristics.)

How does God help you finish your “I am...”?