

Grit 'n' Grace — The Podcast

Episode #216: Knowing the Names Is the Secret to Growing Grit

Amy Carroll 00:00

Today as we continue our series on spiritual disciplines, we're focusing on the names of God. Well, this

Cheri Gregory 00:06

is fabulous, because on the one hand, I am a word nerd who's always been intrigued by the many names of God. And I've also felt overwhelmed because there's so many

Amy Carroll 00:17

true and I am the girl who has trouble memorizing anything except the lyrics to 80 songs. I know all of those. Knowing all the names of God can feel a little intimidating. But the beautiful thing is that his names reveal his many layers. And I gotta tell you that Melissa study the names of God includes so many that are new to me. I mean, I was sort of surprised by that. Sherry. I've studied the names of God several times over the decades, you know, but she's got some new ones in there, and she really delivers on the promise of her subtitle, which is his character revealed

Cheri Gregory 00:53

So, so true. Melissa shares how connecting with God through His many names can transform our everyday lives in practical ways

Amy Carroll 01:02

listened in today, she explains how knowing his names, grows, our grit and helps us through the hard times. Well,

Cheri Gregory 01:09

this is Cheri Gregory.

Amy Carroll 01:10

And I'm Amy Carroll

Cheri Gregory 01:12

and you are listening to grit and grace, the podcast that equips you to lose who you're not love who you are, and live your one life.

Amy Carroll 01:21

Well. Today we're talking with Melissa Spoelstra, author of the names of God His character revealed. Melissa Spoelstra is a popular women's conference speaker, Bible teacher and an author who is madly in love with Jesus and passionate about helping others to seek Christ and to know Him more intimately. She holds a Bachelor of Arts and Bible theology and enjoys teaching God's Word to diverse groups and

churches within the body of Christ. She's a contributor girlfriends and God online devotionals as well as proverbs 31 ministries first five app She's the author of seven Bible studies. Melissa makes her home in Pickerington, Ohio with her pastor has been in for kids,

Cheri Gregory 02:00

the names of God His character revealed is a six week Bible study. And in the introduction, I love how Melissa admits that she's bitten off more than she could chew in the past. So she encourages us to tailor this study to our particular circumstances and needs by giving three options. So the first is basic study. The second is deeper study. And I love number three lighter commitment.

Amy Carroll 02:24

That's always a bonus. But I love the extra insights in the margins too. And hey, Sherry, I'm actually writing a Bible study right now. So I'm gonna steal this idea because there's so much great information and Melissa gives us some insight that she couldn't include in the main body. So she says things like in Scripture, the word name appears over 1000 times while Shem is the Hebrew word for name, the New Testament uses the Greek word Anoma. So Sherry, you know that I collect information. And this is the kind of tidbit that feeds my soul.

Cheri Gregory 03:01

I feel so much more well informed already. I also appreciate the flexibility in the study. So for example, in one lesson, it says to read a particular passage of scripture and then either sketch the scenes or describe them in words. And let me tell you as someone who got all A's in school, except I flunked like I got an actual F in art class every single time all throughout my elementary school years. Oh, yeah, I cringe.

Amy Carroll 03:26

I cringe

Cheri Gregory 03:27

when somebody says, Oh, go ahead and just use stick figures because my best stick figures and nobody even knows that they are stick figures. So I love that she had the flexibility of for those who can sketch they could sketch and for those of us who prefer words, we could use words.

Amy Carroll 03:42

Love that. And of course, as word nerds, we just love the deep dive into the Word of God layers of lovely word riches.

Cheri Gregory 03:52

Alright friends, let's dive into our conversation with Melissa.

Amy Carroll 03:57

Melissa, share with us how you came to write your Bible study on the names of God.

Melissa Spoelstra 04:02

Well, back in the day, the very first Bible study that I ever did was on the names of God it was Lord, I want to know you by Kay Arthur, I was a high school student, and I'm pretty sure it was my pastor's wife who just handed me this book. I had never even heard of women's Bible studies or knew that that was a thing. But I just everyday went through these lessons before I went to bed. And it was really transformative for me, because I had never heard many of the names of God that she went through ellroy ie the God who sees me and El Shaddai, the all sufficient one and that study just really stuck with me. And then as I went to college and got married and had children and had, you know, health struggles with our kids, and all of those things, there were so many times, especially in those moments when you need God most or you're doubting where he is, I feel like he would just bring to mind one of those names for me. And I love that your podcast is called grit and grace because I do think sometimes that's the secret to having grit is that to be able to press through the hard moments. To know who God is and to remember his character. And so it just got to the point where I've wanted to do the names of God for a long time. And it's been done. You know, so many people have done it. But I just felt this prompting from the Holy Spirit that now is the time. And so I pitched it and got it. Yes.

Amy Carroll 05:17

It's so timely. I love your application that when we know the names and character of God, we can press through hard times, and we certainly have been living through hard times, no doubt.

Cheri Gregory 05:27

So I've been fascinated by names ever since I was probably a teenager, I was going through my mother's files, I was helping her file some things and I found a file folder that said baby names, and in it was an old fashioned book of baby names with all their meanings, and I page through it and well, first of all, I found out what my name means. And then I also found because that was the one she put a little star by, but she put little checkmarks and I discovered all the names that I almost was named. So that was pretty funny.

Amy Carroll 05:52

Hilarious.

Melissa Spoelstra 05:53

I love that.

Cheri Gregory 05:54

Fortunately, I was happy to have the one I had. So what it what does your name mean, Melissa?

Melissa Spoelstra 05:58

Yeah, so my name Melissa means honey bee. Really, which is kind of funny. My friends all joke about that because I'm in our group, we have the sassy one and the silly one. And I'm the sweet one. So

Cheri Gregory 06:11

I love it

Amy Carroll 06:12

well, and as sweet as good as I was thinking like the buzzy

Cheri Gregory 06:21

one with a sharp stinger?

Melissa Spoelstra 06:23

What about Amy, what does your name mean? Do

Amy Carroll 06:25

you know my name means Beloved. Oh, I love that has been. It's in names are interesting, right? Because that's kind of the ideas. It's spoken over you. But that's been a hard place for me to live is being beloved, the beloved of God. And so it's beautiful. I have a bracelet that somebody gave me that says it and some days I wear it on purpose to remind myself.

Melissa Spoelstra 06:49

I love that. Sherry, how about you? You found the baby book? So what did it say? Well, my

Cheri Gregory 06:53

parents told me that it meant sweetheart. And that is one possible meaning for it. But it comes from the French word chere. And that means precious, but it also means expensive. So my husband always says it depends on the day.

Amy Carroll 07:11

Well tell us tell us a how significant were biblical names,

Melissa Spoelstra 07:15

you know that you can go different ways with that a lot of people were named just based on an object or the time of birth or where they were born. You know, some examples would be Esau came out Harry, right. So they named me saw which means Harry Yeah, Kumar means palm tree. So I don't know. Did her mom just like palm trees? Or did she like the name? tamer? I mean, why do we all name our kids? A lot of times we care about the meaning. But I don't think my parents really cared about honeybees. They just liked the name Melissa. But names were identifiers in Scripture. And they were certainly even more significant back then. Because they were a sense of I love what you said, Amy about Beloved, being a blessing over you. And a lot of times names were given as a blessing. God used names to prophesied things, sometimes he changed people's names to really signifies something important to identify something in a different way. A couple quick examples of that would be Abraham, who was his name was changed to Abraham. And Abraham means exalted father, but then Abraham means father of multitudes, not just going to give you a child, I'm going to give you a legacy. And same thing with Jacob and Israel. Jacob's name was deceiver, because he's grasping his brother's heel when he comes out, and then they change his name to Israel. And so which means wrestle with God. And that was when Jacob had wrestled with God and just had that experience of really coming to know God through the wrestling. So certainly names are identifiers, but when it comes to the names of God, it's on a whole nother level really, because his names all of them reveal something about his character. And you know, I love that there's not just one there's many names of God because he's so holy and so

incredible. And so kind of other is the word I use that like one name just can't contain him. And it's so fascinating to me how He reveals Himself to people in Scripture in their moment of need. Hey, this is who I am. I mean, his name even one of them is I am right yeah, way I am. And he's like, you need a counselor I am you need a provider I am. You need a healer I am. And he's just showing them in their moments of needs little bits of who he is kind of progressively all the way from the beginning to the end. Beautiful.

Cheri Gregory 09:24

So just to be honest, here, studying the names of God feels like a really brainy theoretical thing to do, which to be honest, I love I love getting all up in my head and doing research the kinds of things how would you say that knowing God's names can influence the nitty gritty of our everyday lives?

Melissa Spoelstra 09:41

That's a great question Sherry. It

Amy Carroll 09:42

does. It's like, Well, why

Melissa Spoelstra 09:43

does it matter what that name means or how it occurred? And is it just purely academic, and I really had to consider that as I was writing the study, because it's very different than say Romans, which is the one I wrote before that where it's like, okay, we learned this, what's the practical application, really easy to do? And I was really asking myself that Question How can women really how can this change their life today, and it is one of those big picture things. And so I ended every day of study with these three sections behold, let's behold who God is. Because I do think if we change the way we think about God, it will change our lives. So we behold Him, then we have to believe him and say, Okay, I believe that you see me, I believe that you're going to provide for me, I believe that you are all sufficient in my life, and really kind of take that ownership. And then the last section is bloom, things will bloom in your life. And that's the application that I found is that to say, Okay, if he really is who He says He is, then that does change the way that I make decisions today, the way that I spend my time today, the way that I spend my money today. And so just kind of thinking through that progression. Originally, my last B was behave because I was like, it changes your behavior, right? And my good Southern friend was like, my mama used to say, behave. That's not the tone we want from God. And I was like, well, let's brainstorm. Let's come up with a different word. And I do I love bloom because it goes right to Jesus being divine. And we are the branches and he is growing that fruit in our lives. And one of the reasons I think it is so important to just have a correct view of God, I love a W. Tozer. Lots of people quote it but he says the most important thing about you is how you think about God, you know that that is the thing that will shape and will impact your life. And I look at culture today, and even in my own life and exposure to many times I think we create God and our image, instead of remembering we were created in his and it answers these deep questions like Who is God? And then when we recognize who made us and why we're here and all of those things, then we can ask that second question, Who am I? And what is my purpose? And where am I? So it is a little bit of it's not as easy as some other Bible studies to do that. Oh, wow. Paul said this, so we should share. But I think it's in this season that we're in to take that time to reflect and really ask those deep questions of Who are you? And what are you asking

of me? What is life really about? And what's it like to have a deep connection with our Creator? It was really meaningful and really impacting in my life and my prayers that it will be in the lives of other women as well. Well, I

Amy Carroll 12:10

love how you explained to us that God can't be contained in one name. And so how many names do you cover in this study, Melissa?

Melissa Spoelstra 12:17

So there's 30 lessons. And yeah, I'd have to look through so I go two weeks through the L names, and not like Lord, ones that start with L but the El names of God, so elohiyim, el rey de El Shaddai, all of those names that start with that just meaning of God, I was a Canaanite name for God in all the land. But then when we add these other endings to them, like Elohim, which is this plural, name it it's this majestic and I've always had glimpses of the Trinity, even there from Genesis one one, which I think is fascinating. Then I spent two weeks going through the yawei names, which is Yahweh is the I Am the self-existent one. And I love how God just adds these little compounds. You know that Yahweh Rafa my healer, Yahweh, Shama, the God who is there. So it's all these little compound words that help us to just understand more and more about him. Then I spent my last two weeks on the Trinity, two days on the father, Adonai, Abba, and then three days on the Holy Spirit, I mean, he is God. He is named in Scripture as the advocate, the Helper, the Comforter, really, that was really meaningful in my life, to really look at the Holy Spirit and his role in our lives. And then I spent the whole last week on Jesus, which is the name above all names, which really takes on a whole new meaning after a whole study on the names of God to realize that his name is above every other name, and to look at and delve deep. So I don't have an exact number. But there are a lot and I'll say, I didn't cover them all. There's so many things for God.

Amy Carroll 13:43

Well, so of all the names in the study that whole list, which one especially stands out to you,

Melissa Spoelstra 13:49

I love this question. It's like when people ask me, what's my favorite Bible study? It's like asking me to pick one of my children. What's your favorite child? Right? I mean, it certainly they're different names that have hit me at different times. But I have to go back to the name elroy II, it's it looks like ROI, ROI. But I, when I looked at the pronunciation, it's I ri. And it's when God appeared to a woman named Hagar. She was an Egyptian servant, a foreigner at the time when we think of God in terms of his relationship with Israel, but it reminds us that he loves and pursues every single person and always has, and so he's pursuing Hagar. She's been mistreated. She's having a hard time. And he shows up and says, I am the God who sees you. And for whatever reason that just as a teenager, you know, growing up in a small town moving in high school, which was a little bit traumatic for me, and just to know, that God saw me really impacted my life and has continued to impact my life in those moments, especially I think when we feel mistreated, or when things are hard to say, I'm not alone. God is not only with me, he sees me. He's looking at me. And so that was really impactful. It's been interesting, as I've talked to other women who have studied the names, how many have them that resonates with as

well. And I think particularly in the season we're in as we're isolated or distanced in some way to know that God sees.

Amy Carroll 15:09

Well, I had a visceral reaction even when you said the name out loud and what it meant. That's a deep meaning for a woman and it was given to a woman. So what a beautiful thing. Yes,

Melissa Spoelstra 15:20

a couple of our listeners had questions for you. One of them wanted to know which name of God is used most frequently in Scripture? Ooh, that's a great question. It's likely your way Yahweh is used so much, especially when you put it with all the different ones of all the Yahweh names. I know that you're always sabay oath, which is the Lord of hosts or the Lord of Heavens, armies is used just throughout so many of the prophets, Jeremiah, Isaiah, it's the most prevalent Yahweh name and I love that it's this army Name of God, kind of he's the commander in chief. And yet it first time it's used in Scripture is to Hannah, another woman, when she is dealing with infertility and the storm of life. And he's like, Hey, I'm the Lord of Heavens, armies. I am going to fight for you. She had this, you know, her sister wife, hinayana, who was constantly pushing her buttons and battling her and Gods like the first time he revealed his name as Lord sabay oath of Yahweh Sabbath was to Hannah, which I think is amazing.

Cheri Gregory 16:18

I just got goosebumps listening to you say that, that is amazing. Ah, all right. And then another listener asked if you have a special name of God, or if you have a name of God, that you would recommend for a special needs adoptive mom to cry out. And she specifically said, not asking for a friend.

Melissa Spoelstra 16:36

So a special needs adoptive mom. Wow. What just initially comes to mind is the name El Shaddai. It's another one that she used so much, I look at that, think about that situation. And my husband and I are in foster care class training right now. And we're thinking about, you know, what's ahead for us. And just, it can be overwhelming. We're like, I don't think I can do this. Like, I don't know if I can handle this. And so the name El Shaddai means all sufficient, just not that we are all sufficient, but that he is. And so anything he lays before us, he is sufficient, because I think about her, this woman who's written in day in and day out, loving on a special needs child and needing that strength and that energy and the sufficiency to keep going and that's who he is and who he wants to be in our lives. The word shad and Hebrew is actually the word for breast like a woman's breast, and it's in the context of a breastfeeding relationship. Like that's the kind of sufficient that you think about a newborn child. They're completely dependent on the mother who's nursing them. And that is the picture. I mean, do we love all of these feminine connections with the names of God, but that to think I breastfed my four children, and I think about how how dependent they were on me during that time, and that that's how God wants us to be on him to be that dependent to realize he's that sufficient to meet our every need. Wow.

Cheri Gregory 17:56

Okay, I'm gobsmacked. Okay, I'll just be honest, when I saw that this was a study on the names of God, I thought, how can you do a whole study on a list? Like, isn't that what you would do? You would just list the names of God and say, there you go have at it. Oh, my thank you for so much. Because I had

no idea the kind of background that you're pulling into this. And that is, clearly I need to be doing more study, because that is amazing. I had no idea.

Melissa Spoelstra 18:20

Well, I think there's something interesting about the law of first mentioned, it's not something we talk about a lot. But it is very powerful to look at the first time something's mentioned in Scripture, it doesn't discount everything that comes after it. But it kind of sets the tone. It's like, you know, the first time that something's introduced to look at that topic and go, where did God first introduced this? And so that was kind of my tact to go where was the first time each one of these names was introduced? Who were the people involved? What was the situation that was going on? And that was definitely really fascinating to look. So as much as you can say, it's a study on a list. It's really kind of a character study of how people interacted with God, and how God showed who he was to those people like Gideon, people like Hannah, people, like Hagar, often with Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, it was a lot in Genesis, which was really enjoyable. Well, so

Amy Carroll 19:12

Sherry, and I, I guess, is sort of a pattern have done a lot of interviews with authors who have written trade books, but this is a Bible study. And so tell us about the structure of it, because I think we're all we're into it. Now. You heard Sherry like we are into it, we want to know what does it look like to go through your book? Yeah, so

Melissa Spoelstra 19:33

it's designed as a six week study. And then there's five lessons per each week. So basically, there's 30 lessons, you could do it with a group if you wanted to. There's a leader guide with all kinds of group questions and information. There's weekly teachings video teachings that can be used in a group setting or you know, these days can be used over zoom or in a closed Facebook group. They're giving permission for them to be shown to ladies that way. So There's just all kinds of creative ways that you can get together to see it. But I often get the question, Can I do this Bible study without the videos? And I would just say absolutely 100% when I create the teachings, I really just get on my face and say, Lord of everything we've learned out of these five lessons for the week, what would you have me highlight, reinforce and strengthen and maybe tell some new stories. One of the joys for me and the names of God is I'm a huge church history buff. I love women from church history. Women like Susanna Wesley, women like Gladys a word, he was a missionary, Amy Carmichael, who was in India. So in every video, I told a story of a woman from church history and how she trusted in that name in a real life circumstance in her life. But you could totally do the study without the video and not have missed any of the actual content of what's going on. I mean, obviously, I My prayer is that the teaching videos would enhance and drive home and reinforce that you could just do the study on your own, you could go through it in six weeks, you could go through it in 12 weeks, but that's the structure. And to answer your question, what makes it different than a trade book, because I have written for trade books, and it is different. And so it's a curriculum based, you're gonna need your Bible, you're gonna need a pen, and it's going to introduce information, but then ask you to stop and reflect and say, okay, answer this question, or do this activity or interact with the text. So that that is something that makes it different definitely, than a trade book.

Cheri Gregory 21:29

So you mentioned, zoom, and Facebook groups. We're recording this at a time when many of us are unable to meet face to face. So what are some ways readers can creatively come together to do this study as a group, even if they aren't able to meet face to face?

Melissa Spoelstra 21:45

Right. So one great way is zoom. It's a great platform. We're on it right now. And I think people would anybody with children in school is getting much more familiar with zoom culture. But you know, and obviously love to be in a living room with 10 women, that's so ideal to be able to discuss what God is teaching you. But what I found is I would rather it be not as great, but still have it rather than not have it at all. That's kind of like we're able to go to church again now. But we have to wear masks. And I don't love singing and worshipping God in a mask if I'm being honest. But I would rather worship Him in a mask corporately, with my people than not worship him at all. And so I do think, you know, yes, it's sometimes hard on zoom, but we can figure this out, we can get on there, talk about the Bible study, you can even put the DVD in the hosts person and watch the video together on zoom. Another great option is Facebook groups, you can put everybody in your group in that closed, private group, and you can show the videos there that anyone can watch on their own time. Or you can set a time and and make it a Facebook Live and comment on there as you're watching it and interact. And you can put the questions from the leader guide for discussion that you would normally discuss in a group, you can put them on Facebook, and you can discuss them in the comments. And these these are ways that we can continue because we don't isolate ourselves from is God's word and from other women, we can physical distance, but we cannot actually spiritually distance ourselves. We need each other more than ever, I think.

Cheri Gregory 23:12

Now, you said that you and Barb Bruce, who we love, did a YouTube training for leaders for virtual groups. Can you tell us just a little bit about that, we'll be sure to put the link to that in our show notes. You know,

Melissa Spoelstra 23:22

it's easy to say yeah, just get on there and do it. But we actually made a video where we shared our screen and said, here's what you click to go get the video Good. Your if your computer doesn't play DVDs, here's some software. And here's exactly how to let us walk you through it for leaders to say, this is how you can make this work kind of a how to screen sharing, and she did part of it. And I did part of it. And we just had so much fun. Because we want to equip leaders, it can be hard, it can be daunting to figure it out. And I know I'm just a really visual person who needs to show me and so that's what we did love each video, and it helps me not sweat quite as hard when I'm working with technology.

Amy Carroll 24:03

Well, Melissa, what closing words do you have for our listeners who want to connect more deeply with God?

Melissa Spoelstra 24:09

I love this verse from Isaiah that talks about those who know his name will experience His power. These are days when we're feeling powerless at times. And I would just say when you feel powerless run to the names of God. And I think a real practical way to do that is in those moments in the middle of the night when you can't sleep. I know I've had sleep issues around this whole thing that's going on or maybe for you it's when you're driving in the car or something's got you concerned whether it's financial, emotional, physical health things, one of the ways that we can redirect our minds is to rehearse the names and the character of God. So sometimes I just go through the lists, what are some I names? What are some yawei names? What do they mean? I like to use the alphabet to to just say okay, I'm going to start with a I do this when I can't sleep you are ABA you are at an eye B You are beautiful. C You are the crisis. Son of the living God, and I'm telling you by the time you get to Z, usually I'm asleep before I get to z and z is a tough one, right? I used to always go with zebra maker, because God is zebra maker. But to me that he is zealous for us and I'm like, okay, he has a deal. That's true. So we have to be creative with some of those letters. But I just think it's such a tangible practical way especially during these times to redirect our mind on to who God is. And then he can remind us and give us the power and the strength that we need to tackle whatever it is we have in front of us.

Cheri Gregory 25:31

You know, Amy, I expected that listening to Melissa would make my brain feel bigger but wow, My heart

Amy Carroll 25:37

feels fuller to You are so right. The way she talks about God His names really is like getting to know a friend. So the names of God is truly a study that will feed every part of us and grow our relationship with God deeper to

Cheri Gregory 25:54

Well friends, We sure hope that you've enjoyed listening to episode number 216 of grit and grace, the podcast as much as we've enjoyed making it for you.

Amy Carroll 26:04

And we want to say a big thank you to Melissa Spoelstra, author of the names of God His character revealed and her publisher Abingdon press for making this episode possible.

Cheri Gregory 26:14

If you're looking for a Bible study that increases both your intellectual knowledge of God and your intimacy with God, pull together a group of friends for the names of God His character revealed,

Amy Carroll 26:27

check out our webpage at gritandgrace.com slash Episode 216 there you'll find our transcript a link to Melissa's pollsters Bible study the names of God His character revealed and a link to Melissa's website.

Cheri Gregory 26:41

If you love grit and grace. One powerful way to share it is to write a review on iTunes. This one really encouraged us It says this podcast gives me great wisdom in a fun and relatable way. I so appreciate the authenticity of Amy and Sherry, their willingness to be honest and open leads to great podcasts. Keep them coming. Thank you so much. And we absolutely will. And we're going to read another review soon. If you hear one, and it's yours. Send us your mailing address through our website and we will send you a free copy of our co authored book. Exhale.

Amy Carroll 27:15

That's so fun and exciting. Next week we'll be talking with Bethany Howard, author of permission granted, embrace who you are, cultivate courage impact your world

Cheri Gregory 27:26

for today. Grow Your grit,

Amy Carroll 27:28

embrace God's grace.

Cheri Gregory 27:30

And as God reveals the next step to live your one life. Well,

Amy Carroll 27:34

we'll be cheering you on. So take it!