

DEVOTIONAL STUDY  
WITH VIDEO ACCESS

NAMES OF

God

Living Unafraid

Grace Fox



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SESSION 6

# Yahweh & Shamamah

The LORD Is There

**B**REAKFAST HAD JUST begun at a conference I was attending near Budapest, Hungary, when the event host approached me. His expression said it all.

“It’s your husband,” he remarked as he handed me his phone.

My heart knew what Gene was going to say. For the past three years, my dad’s health had slowly declined after he suffered two massive strokes. More than once, Mom had called to tell us that his condition had suddenly worsened and she thought the end was near. But days later, Dad would rally and stabilize until the next sudden turn.

The past couple of weeks, though, had been different. Dad’s state had worsened yet again, but this time a comeback seemed unlikely. I flew to Alberta to visit him, and during that time, I faced a most difficult decision: Should I stay with Dad or go on my upcoming trip? Several months earlier, I’d agreed to a speaking tour in Eastern Europe. A conference in Hungary for missionary families was my first scheduled stop, and afterward I planned to stay for two days with Diane, an American coworker living in Slovakia. She would then accompany me by train to fulfill nearly a dozen speaking engagements in Poland and Hungary.

Diane had spent hours coordinating these events and arranging accommodations. I had already purchased my plane ticket to Budapest, prepared my messages, and sent out handouts for translation. The women’s ministry leaders in each city had handled advertisements and registrations, pouring their best efforts into the details.

With my departure for Eastern Europe only days away, I sat at Dad’s bedside and prayed for wisdom as he slept. Canceling the trip seemed unfair to everyone involved overseas. But what if I made the trip and Dad died before I returned? Not being present to celebrate his life and to support my mom didn’t seem right either.

After praying for guidance and discussing my concerns with my family, I sensed God telling me to fulfill my commitment overseas. I said goodbye

to my father, returned home to pack my suitcase, and cried all the way to the airport. Twelve hours after I landed in Budapest, my dad took his last breath, and Gene phoned to break the sad news.

My worst fears had come true: Dad was gone, and my mother, siblings, husband, and children would celebrate his life without me. I felt strangely alone in a surreal situation. In retrospect, I don't even know how I managed to keep it together emotionally and mentally. Traveling by train from one city to the next in a foreign country, teaching the Word and praying with women at each event, visiting missionaries in their homes, and sleeping in a different bed every night—all while grieving my father's death—was no small ordeal.

There was only one explanation: *Yahweh Shammah* was with me. His compassion comforted me. His hands carried me. His strength empowered me. His presence made all the difference.

## **Yahweh Shammah: What Does It Mean?**

As painful as my situation was, it provided a precious opportunity to experience God by his name *Yahweh Shammah* (pronounced “SHAHM-mah”), which in Hebrew means “The LORD Is There.” It appears only once in the entire Bible: “From that day the name of the city [Jerusalem] will be ‘The LORD Is There’” (Ezekiel 48:35).

Ezekiel was a prophet whose messages came at a dark time in Israel's history. The people had rebelled against God—again—and were paying the consequences—again. God allowed the Babylonians to take them into captivity, so now the Israelites were living as strangers in a foreign land. During this time, the Babylonians also destroyed their capital city, Jerusalem, and the holy temple King Solomon had built. The prospect of returning to their homeland waned as time passed, and they lost hope for a better future.

Amid the Israelites' desperation, God spoke through Ezekiel to promise them a future far better than anything they could imagine: Their nation

## Names of God: Living Unafraid

would be restored, and God’s presence would dwell among them. To fully appreciate the significance of this message, we must understand that Ezekiel’s initial prophecies focused on God’s judgment for the Israelites’ sin. One of those judgments was the reluctant departure of God’s glory from the temple, as described in a vision Ezekiel received (Ezekiel 10:4, 18–19; 11:22–23).

Throughout the generations, God’s people had seen his presence manifest in many ways. They had witnessed his power when he rescued them from Egypt (Deuteronomy 4:37). He led them through the wilderness with a cloud and a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21). When the tabernacle was finished, his presence immediately filled it (Exodus 40:33–38). When Solomon built the temple and offered a dedication prayer, God’s presence filled the place so gloriously that the priests could not enter (2 Chronicles 7:1–3).

Time and again, the Israelites beheld God’s presence in their midst, but they still turned their backs on him. God sent prophets like Ezekiel to warn them of the consequences if they continued in their rebellion. When they refused to listen, God finally said, “Enough is enough,” and he removed his presence. But because God is who he is, he refused to break his covenant of love with them.

The book of Ezekiel is a heavy read, but it ends on a hope-filled note when God promises that his presence will return—*Yahweh Shammah*, “The LORD Is There.” The name is referencing Jerusalem, but it reveals an important aspect of God’s character: He wanted to assure the Israelites that, although he was allowing them to suffer for a time as a means of discipline, he would not ultimately cast them aside; he would once again dwell with them.

## How Shall We Respond?

Three actions come to mind when I think about responding appropriately to the life-altering truth revealed by God's name *Yahweh Shammah*—"The LORD Is There":

1. **Believe in God's presence.** I can't count how often I've prayed, "Father, please be with me today." I wonder if he sits in the heavens and shakes his head, saying, "Grace, Grace, when will you learn to believe my promises?" If you're a Jesus-follower as I am and you've prayed the same request, then together let's commit to changing our prayer to "Father, thank you for being with me today." And let's also live by faith, not emotions. "Don't equate the presence of God with a good mood or a pleasant temperament," says Max Lucado. "God is near whether you are happy or not."<sup>6</sup>
2. **Practice God's presence.** Brother Lawrence was a monk who served as a cook in his monastery in the 1600s. Many today regard him as an authority on living moment by moment in the awareness of God's presence. He wrote, "The most holy and necessary practice in our spiritual life is the presence of God. That means finding constant pleasure in His divine company, speaking humbly and lovingly with Him in all seasons, at every moment, without limiting the conversation in any way."<sup>7</sup> As Brother Lawrence did while scrubbing pots and pans, make mundane tasks an act of worship by talking to *Yahweh Shammah* as to a dear friend. When making a meal, thank him for the gift of good food every day. Thank him for hot-water showers, clean drinking water, and clothes you get to wash, dry, and fold. And when you don't feel like talking to him, simply enjoy silence in his company.
3. **Honor God's presence.** Housing the Holy Spirit is an incredible privilege. Let's ensure he feels welcome by keeping our spiritual house clean, so to speak. When he pinpoints sin, confess it, repent, and make restitution with others if

necessary. Let's allow him to develop his spiritual fruits in us so that we reflect Jesus to others.

God's presence surrounds us and dwells within us. Every moment. Everywhere. It's inescapable because he is *Yahweh Shammah*. Like David said in Psalm 139:6, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me"!

## Prayer

*Yahweh Shammah*, I praise you for being the ever-present God who will never leave or forsake me. Thank you for being near me when my heart is broken. Thank you for surrounding me, for going before me and behind me. Thank you for holding me close, even when others cast me away. I look forward to the coming day when you will take me to my forever home to live in your presence there. In the meantime, your nearness is all I want. Come and satisfy me with your sweet, powerful, holy presence. Help me walk in the truth of this manifestation of your character, and transform me through the process. In Jesus's name, amen.



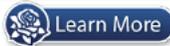
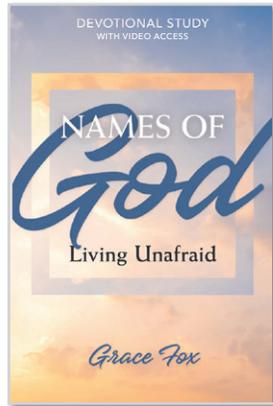
### 3 Read Psalm 73:28.

- How did the psalmist describe his nearness to God?
- What actions can you take to draw near to him?
- How can you avoid a gradual drift away from him?

### 4 Read Galatians 2:20.

- Who lives in believers?
- In light of this truth, what must we do?



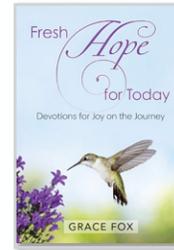


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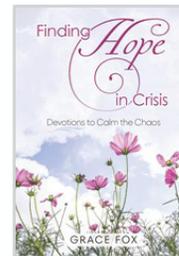
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