

DEVOTIONAL STUDY
WITH VIDEO ACCESS

NAMES OF

God

Growing Strong

Grace Fox

Grace Fox writes with the insight of a seasoned Bible teacher and the wisdom of a trusted friend, making *Growing Strong* an essential resource. Each session reveals facets of God’s character that will anchor your soul, strengthen your faith, and deepen your worship. Whether you’re facing a difficult season or simply longing to grow closer to God, this study will transform your faith from mere belief into unshakable trust.

Carol Kent, speaker and author of *He Holds My Hand: Experiencing God’s Presence and Protection*

Grace Fox’s attention to detail and application in *Growing Strong* makes this book a “Let’s go deeper” read that opens a window to the freshness of a morning breeze. The book is beautifully supported by solid research and biblical truth, and Grace includes meaningful contemporary stories that help readers see each truth playing out in real time.

Cynthia Ruchti, author of more than 50 books, including *The Spirit of Christmas: Discovering His Presence throughout the Advent Season*

Perhaps now more than ever, life can feel overwhelming—which is why Grace Fox’s thoughtful and timely exploration of how to truly grow strong is so needed. *Growing Strong* isn’t about gritting our teeth or pushing through; it’s about going deeper—anchoring our lives in who God is when everything around us feels unsteady. With wisdom, warmth, and biblical depth, Grace invites us to wrestle honestly with hard questions: Can surrender really lead to strength? Can praise rise from suffering? Can weakness become the very place where God meets us most powerfully? Through rich Scripture, sound theology, and deeply relatable stories, she reveals the spiritual foundations that form resilient faith. This is not a book you’ll read once and shelve—it’s one you’ll return to in seasons when your faith feels stretched and your heart needs reminding where true strength is found. I highly recommend *Growing Strong*!

Cheryl Weber, cohost of *100 Huntley Street*; director of Crossroads Cares, a ministry of Canada’s Crossroads Communications

Strength is something we all feel the need for. How do we find the strength to face life's trials and disappointments? Grace Fox shows us the answer brilliantly and beautifully by inviting us deeper into the character of God. As you study God's faithful character, trust is going to become easier. I highly endorse this book!

Becky Harling, Bible teacher, coach, and author of *Our Father: A Study of the Lord's Prayer* and *Friend-Wise: Practical Ideas for Richer Relationships*

With pastoral warmth and biblical clarity, Grace Fox gently guides us to know God more intimately through His names—revealing how true strength is formed not by striving harder but by trusting deeper. This book doesn't offer quick fixes; it offers steady formation, reminding us that spiritual resilience is cultivated as we learn who God is and how faithfully He meets us in every season. *Growing Strong* is a wise, hope-filled companion for anyone longing to stand firm, persevere well, and grow stronger from the inside out.

Dr. Michelle Bengtson, board certified clinical neuropsychologist; host of *Your Hope Filled Perspective* podcast; author of several award-winning books, including *The Hem of His Garment* and *Sacred Scars*

What a gifted writer Grace Fox is. Reading each page feels like having a fascinating conversation with an articulate friend. She has “been there and done that,” wears the T-shirt, and has one for me. In her effortless style, Fox outlines seven names of God and presents their biblical background in an intriguing way that brings life. Even more impactful, she tells her own story and the stories of others to bring those names to life in the present day. With such usable, personal, and sacred application, *Growing Strong* fills me with certainty that I am continuously in God's loving heart. This book is a retreat between covers.

Dr. Deborah M. Maxey, Licensed Professional Counselor; Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist; award-winning Christian Fiction author (*The Endling: A Novel*)

NAMES OF GOD

Growing Strong

DEVOTIONAL STUDY

GRACE FOX



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A Note from Grace

When you hear the word *strong*, does a particular mental image come to mind? Perhaps you envision a single mom juggling two jobs, a soldier undergoing the rigors of training, or an eagle in flight. Wouldn't it be fun to compare the variety of possible answers?

I happen to envision professional athletes. One of my favorite armchair winter sports is freestyle skiing. Since I can barely handle the bunny hill, I'm awestruck when brave skiers perform amazing acrobatic feats while racing down a snowy obstacle course marked by moguls and ramps. Another favorite sport—couples' figure skating—makes me wonder how in the world one skater can lift and carry the other while skimming across the ice on two skinny blades. It's beyond me!

Athletes of this caliber are born with natural abilities, but they hone their skills through practice. They also do daily workouts, eat nutritious foods, and get proper rest to strengthen their bodies for the rigors exacted by their sport. That's how things work in the physical realm, and a similar principle proves true in the spiritual realm. Google AI actually gets this right, declaring that “in the Bible, strength refers to more than just physical power. It involves having the inner resources to face challenges and overcome obstacles with courage, perseverance, and resilience.”

Life, especially in today's world, requires this kind of strength. Without it, difficult circumstances and discouraging news headlines—not to mention the weightiness of our daily routines—can knock us flat. Sometimes we choose to ignore what's happening in the world at large because dealing with the challenges in our own little corner is consuming enough:

- Cancer strikes yet another loved one.
- Someone we trust proves untrustworthy.
- One of our adult kids ghosts us.
- Housing and food prices increase while our bank account decreases—and the car needs repairs again.
- We wrestle with issues like anger and unforgiveness, feelings of worthlessness, or futile efforts to defeat a self-destructive habit.

You and I need spiritual strength to deal with the difficulties we face, but there's a problem: Developing that strength doesn't come easy. Engaging regularly in disciplines such as Bible study, prayer, and serving others is necessary for us to flourish; but our spiritual muscles grow strongest when they are stretched, put to the test, and pushed beyond what feels good. I know, I know—that's not what you want to hear, but it's true: Being stretched beyond our level of comfort helps us grow strong. So does suffering. That's how things work in the spiritual realm.

Daniel 11:32 contains a nugget of profound wisdom: “The people who know their God will be strong and take action” (NASB). Experience has taught me the need for strength to navigate life's obstacle course, marked by mountains of joy, valleys of grief, and detours of disappointment. I know how much strength it takes to rise back up when circumstances knock you down. I understand the strength needed to get back on your feet when you trip over your mistakes. I also know that *God* is the source of that strength—and therein lies my reason for writing this book.

Perhaps you've read one or both of the previous books in the *Names of God* series: *Living Unafraid* and *Knowing Peace*. If so, the understanding you gained equipped you with courage and filled you with peace. In this book, the truths you discover will strengthen your spiritual muscles and empower you to soar rather than sink when life brings challenges.

I pray that the truths you discover through these names will leave you awestruck at God’s bigness and beauty. As you learn to apply them, may they fill you with empowering strength, steadfast perseverance, unflinching resilience, and humble gratitude for all he has done to draw you into friendship with himself. May they infuse you with joyful surrender to the One who created and gifted you and walks beside you every day.

If you would be so kind, I would greatly appreciate your help in spreading the word about this book to your friends, family, and church leaders. Feel free to post about it on social media and include a selfie with the book in your hand. Writing a review or asking your library to buy a copy will help others learn about it too. Let’s work together to share the “growing strong” message with those whose hearts feel weak.

Know you are loved,

Grace

grace@gracefox.com

PS: Be sure to enjoy the other resources I offer:

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Scan the QR code or go to
tyndale.life/GrowingStrong

to enjoy an introductory video from author Grace Fox.



SESSION 1

Adonai

Lord and
Supreme Master

MY HUSBAND, GENE, comes from a family that enjoys all things nautical. Growing up in a beachfront home provided him with happy memories of summer days spent splashing in the saltwater. When our children were toddlers, Gene expressed a desire to see them experience similar joys. I wasn't surprised when one day, after seeing a For Sale sign pointing toward a lakeside neighborhood, he rushed to fetch me.

We went together to spy the two-story home from a respectable distance, and it didn't take long to notice that it appeared somewhat neglected. We thought the poor thing just needed a coat of paint and a dose of tender loving care, so we phoned the realtor's number on the sign and arranged for a viewing within the hour.

Nothing could have prepared us for what we encountered when the real estate agent escorted us to the house. Near the entrance, a bird cage hung from a tree, holding a crow with a broken wing. A sheet of plywood covered a gaping hole in the ground a few feet from the door. A stench hit us when we stepped inside. Items of every description were strewn across the floor, creating a walking hazard. And the living room rug? Well, let's just say that describing it here wouldn't be polite.

Based on past experience, I thought that booking a viewing meant the occupants would be elsewhere. On this day, however, they clearly did not receive the memo. In the living room, a man sat in a drunken stupor, liquor bottle in hand, staring at the television while three young women eyed us with suspicion and four youngsters chased each other from room to room.

We later discovered that the home's owner, an elderly man who spent his days at the local bar, had invited these folks to stay with him after their landlord evicted them. He had inherited the property a few years earlier but held no interest in maintaining it. The main floor where the guests lived was in bad shape, but the daylight basement was even worse. Plywood covered its broken windows, and the rubbish that covered the dirt floor included a broken toilet, several threadbare tires, an old

dresser stuffed with musty clothes, and lots and lots of trash—dozens of bags of household waste, to be exact.

Call us impulsive, naive, or desperate if you wish, but since the property's dilapidated state put it within our price range, we took ownership. We bought a used pickup truck to haul the junk to the dump, and over the next four summers, we used the yard for lakeside picnics.

All the while, we lived in our double-wide mobile home a couple of miles away and diligently saved our money until we finally had enough to remodel. But one potential contractor shook his head and said, "I don't know what's in those walls. I wouldn't touch your house with a fifty-foot pole." Another expert agreed, and a third suggested we ask the fire department to burn the house down as a practice drill. Gene was a volunteer firefighter at the time and loved the idea! He offered the suggestion to the fire chief, who readily accepted.

Gene labored on the rooftop for a week, peeling off the shingles in preparation for the big day. When the time arrived, a fire truck and tanker rolled down the single-lane dirt road. Neighbors gathered and cheered as flames devoured the eyesore. But that wasn't the end! After clearing the debris, we secured a mortgage and hired a contractor to build the home of our dreams. Gene and I acknowledged the new house as God's gift and dedicated it to him for his purposes. It wasn't fancy, but it perfectly suited our needs.

Over the years, we hosted barbecues for friends, family, church groups, and our kids' sports teams. We provided overnight accommodations for missionaries traveling through the area. We purposely designed the daylight basement for easy modification, knowing that as empty nesters, we would want to provide weary missionaries and pastors with a self-contained suite.

And yet God had other plans. We lived in our dream house only four years before he led us to work at a year-round Christian camp in British Columbia. Was it difficult to leave the house behind? Absolutely.

We considered hanging on to the property as an investment, but our new circumstances made that financially unfeasible. Selling it became the only option, and the timing coincided with the plunge in the real estate market in our area. Go figure.

The fact that God had allowed us to go through the labor and expense of demolishing the old and building the new, only to change our direction, made little sense. But then, because he is *Adonai*—Lord and Supreme Master—God had every right to do with us and our house as he deemed best. Our names were written on the title, but ultimately he—not we—owned the house. And he owned us too. When he gave us our marching orders to put it up for sale and move on to a new assignment, there was only one right response: “Yes, sir.”

Adonai: What Does It Mean?

God’s Hebrew name *Adonai* (pronounced “ah-doh-NIGH”) appears more than four hundred times in the Old Testament and is usually translated into English as “Lord” (capital *L* followed by the lowercase letters *ord*). The name attests that God is the Supreme Lord and Master of everything.¹ It also implies that he owns everything and that you and I, as his servants, do whatever he asks. Here are three instances where the name is used:

- **Exodus 4:10:** “Moses pleaded with the LORD [*Yahweh*], ‘O Lord [*Adonai*], I’m not very good with words. I never have been, and I’m not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.’”
- **Psalms 16:1–2:** “Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the LORD [*Yahweh*], ‘You are my Lord [*Adonai*]; apart from you I have no good thing.’” (NIV)
- **Psalms 30:8:** “To you, LORD [*Yahweh*], I called; to the Lord [*Adonai*] I cried for mercy.” (NIV)

Adonai (sometimes spelled *Adonay*) is a form of the Hebrew word *adon*, which can mean “lord,” “master,” or “owner,” suggesting the concept of dominion.² *Adon* is often used in the Bible to refer to a superior in a respectful way or to address someone with dignity and esteem. It can also be used to reference God in a very general way, but the word *Adonai* is used much more often.

Adonai technically means “my lords,” but in Scripture it is used in a singular sense to refer to the one true God. One possible reason for this seeming discrepancy is what is known as the “plural of majesty”:

The majestic plural, sometimes referred to as the “royal we,” is a grammatical form in which a single individual—often someone of high status or authority—uses a plural pronoun instead of a singular one.... A helpful comparison can be noted in royal contexts outside the Bible. For instance, certain European monarchs have historically spoken of themselves in the plural: “We declare thus and so.” The sense is not quantitative plurality but rather an elevation of position. In Scripture, the same principle heightens the focus on the majestic and unparalleled authority of the Lord.³

While most names explored in the *Names of God* series describe God’s character, *Adonai*, like *Yahweh* and *Yahweh Shalom*, implies relationship between God and his creation. It also implies our duty to treat God with honor and reverence. For instance, when we place our faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, he becomes our Master, or Owner, and we become his servants, or slaves. The apostle Paul explained it like this to the Christian believers in Rome:

When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin

is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 6:20–23

Words like *master*, *servant*, and *slave* in the context of our relationship with God might cause us to cringe and conjure up a mental image of a tyrant yelling, “Do as I say or else!” Or maybe the concept makes us think of pride-filled leaders, church or otherwise, who use their positions to abuse others. Let’s banish those images, okay? They do not, in any way, reflect the true nature of *Adonai*.

Adonai lovingly assumes full responsibility for his servants’ well-being.

While slavery was a widespread reality in Old Testament times, biblical laws served to protect slaves and provide for the desperately poor. In exchange for service, masters gave their slaves much-needed shelter, food, clothing, and other necessities. They also provided the training, tools, and equipment needed for the work.

Masters sometimes treated their slaves as family members and allowed them to express any needs they might have.

This is the correct image of God depicted by the name *Adonai*. He lovingly assumes full responsibility for his servants’ well-being. In exchange, he receives their complete allegiance and obedience. Understanding this aspect of our relationship with God strengthens our trust in him and fortifies us to overcome fear. Because of *Adonai*’s commitment to us, we needn’t be scared to say yes to him without first knowing all the details of his assignments for us. We can kick hesitation to the curb and respond with confidence, joy, and peace.

THE WORD *ADON* IN THE BIBLE

Adonai is a form of the Hebrew root word *adon*, which means “lord,” “master,” or “owner.” *Adon* is used more than three hundred times in the Old Testament. Here are some examples:

- **Honoring a husband:** “[Sarah] laughed silently to herself and said, ‘How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master [*adon*]-my husband—is also so old?’” (Genesis 18:12)
- **Honoring an older brother:** “Give this message to my master [*adon*] Esau: ‘Humble greetings from your servant Jacob.’” (Genesis 32:4)
- **Honoring a king:** “I am afraid of my lord [*adon*] the king, who has ordered that you [Daniel] eat this food and wine. If you become pale ... I am afraid the king will have me beheaded.” (Daniel 1:10)
- **Referring to a military leader:** “Uriah replied, ‘The Ark and the armies of Israel and Judah are living in tents, and Joab and my master’s [*adon*] men are camping in the open fields.’” (2 Samuel 11:11)
- **Addressing a noble official:** “If you find [Joseph’s] cup with any one of us, let that man die. And all the rest of us, my lord [*adon*], will be your slaves.” (Genesis 44:9)
- **Addressing an angel:** “[Zechariah] asked the angel, ‘What are these two olive trees on each side of the lampstand, and what are the two olive branches that pour out golden oil through two gold tubes?’ ‘Don’t you know?’ [the angel] asked. ‘No, my lord [*adon*],’ [Zechariah] replied.” (Zechariah 4:11-13)
- **Referring to God in a general way:** “The mountains melt like wax before the LORD [*Yahweh*], before the Lord [*adon*] of all the earth.” (Psalm 97:5)

Abram Acknowledges God as Master

The name *Adonai* first appears in Genesis 15:2. Here is how that passage reads in context, as it appears in the *Names of God Bible* (which uses the spelling *Adonay*):

*Later **Yahweh** spoke his word to Abram in a vision. He said, “Abram, don’t be afraid. I am your shield. Your reward will be very great.” Abram asked, “**Adonay Yahweh**, what will you give me? Since I’m going to die without children, Eliezer of Damascus will inherit my household. You have given me no children, so this member of my household will be my heir.”*

GENESIS 15:1–3 NOG

This conversation seems to take place about a full decade after *Yahweh* promised to give Abram an heir and make him a great nation (Genesis 12:1–7). Ten years feels like eternity when you’re waiting to see a promise fulfilled, especially when old age is a factor. Abram’s prime has long since disappeared from the rearview mirror, and the prospect of fathering a child seems bygone too. If you read *Names of God: Knowing Peace*, you may recall this same theme from session 3, where Abram meets God as *El Shaddai* in Genesis 17:1–2.

Up to this point in the Abram narrative, the name *Yahweh* (“LORD”) has appeared numerous times. But here, in Genesis 15:2, Abram suddenly addresses God as *Adonay Yahweh*. Why does he do this? I have a hypothesis that may answer this question, drawn from the bigger picture of what was happening in Abram’s life at the time. Let me backtrack to explain.

Genesis 14 tells the story of Abram and 318 trained men from his household warring against several foreign armies that had plundered Sodom and Gomorrah. The armies also kidnapped many of the towns’ inhabitants, including Abram’s nephew Lot. Upon Abram’s victorious return from the battlefield, a king and priest named Melchizedek meets and greets him with these words:

Blessed be Abram by God Most High [El Elyon], Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High [El Elyon], who delivered your enemies into your hand.

GENESIS 14:19–20 NIV

If you read *Names of God: Living Unafraid*, you may recall learning that this is the first biblical mention of the name *El Elyon*, which declares that God is supreme over everything. His sovereignty rules, and he always has the final say.

It appears that Abram’s encounter with Melchizedek sparks a spiritual aha moment for Abram. Using our sanctified imaginations, we can see how the light bulb turned on for Abram as he realized, “It’s true! Men fought the battle, but God—*El Elyon*—won the victory. He rules over everything. He is supreme.” This wasn’t merely a wee flicker of enlightenment. Instead, it must have resembled a full beam of unfiltered sunshine, for Abram responds to Melchizedek’s blessing by giving him a tenth of all the goods he had recovered during his campaign (Genesis 14:20). When the king of Sodom offers to let Abram keep the remaining 90 percent of the plunder, Abram rejects his offer without a second thought. His fresh insights compel him to reserve all honor for *El Elyon* as his one and only Provider (Genesis 14:21–24).

Fast-forward to Genesis 15:1–3, and you’ll notice a possible connection to Abram’s encounter with Melchizedek. For reference, here is the passage again:

*Later **Yahweh** spoke his word to Abram in a vision. He said, “Abram, don’t be afraid. I am your shield. Your reward will be very great.” Abram asked, “**Adonay Yahweh**, what will you give me? Since I’m going to die without children, Eliezer of Damascus will inherit my household. You have given me no children, so this member of my household will be my heir.”*

GENESIS 15:1–3 NIV

I suspect that Abram's newfound knowledge about *El Elyon* has made a profound impact on him, and here he responds in the only logical way possible—by placing himself under God's authority. Addressing God by using the name *Adonai* demonstrates his posture of humility.

But the story doesn't end there. In fact, this moment—when Abram acknowledges God as his Master and himself as God's servant—marks a new beginning in the relationship between Abram and God. This is evident when God responds to Abram's question by disclosing two missing pieces of the promise puzzle:

*Then the LORD said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for **you will have a son of your own** who will be your heir." Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, "Look up into the sky and **count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!**"*

GENESIS 15:4-5 (EMPHASIS ADDED)

Abram's acknowledgment of God as *Adonai* led to a new depth of intimacy between them, as God revealed more details about how he would fulfill his promise to make Abram a great nation. The next verse tells us Abram's response to God's revelation:

And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

GENESIS 15:6

It's interesting that the New Testament writer James also references Abram's response—and he even adds a new nugget of insight. Discussing how faith and actions work together, James says:

*"[Abram] believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." **He was even called the friend of God.***

JAMES 2:23 (EMPHASIS ADDED)

You may be asking yourself, *What does all of this have to do with any of us?* Read on to find out!

Abram, Adonai, and Us

Abram experienced a relationship with God for years before acknowledging him as *Adonai*, and we are not so different. As born-again Christians in the Western church, we read the Bible, attend services, sing worship songs, give our tithes, and engage in other faith-related activities—because that’s what good Christians do. If these behaviors alone define our understanding of what a relationship with God looks like, then we will eventually grow bored and feel unfulfilled, making it easy to wander off the right path. Despite knowing better, we might get stuck in bad habits and addictive behaviors. But if we come to know God as *Adonai*, all of that can change.

Abram’s faith in God blossomed into friendship with God when he made God his Master: “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.’ He was even called the friend of God” (James 2:23). Pause for a moment to ponder the phrase “friend of God.” The word *friend* is translated from the Greek word *philos*, which means “someone dearly loved (prized) in a personal, intimate way; a trusted confidant, held dear in a close bond of personal affection.”⁴ When we acknowledge God as *Adonai*—Lord and Supreme Master—this is the relationship to which God invites us.

If we accept his invitation, imagine the ramifications! Besides facing every day assured that God is on our side, knowing that he prizes us will strengthen our sense of self-worth. Knowing that he deeply loves us will strengthen our identity and help us overcome insecurities. Knowing that he considers us as trusted confidants will strengthen our resolve to honor him, which guarantees his blessing in our lives. Why, pray tell, would we settle for anything less?

Here’s why: Our human nature resists bowing the knee to anyone. We want to be our own master, choose our own way, and follow our own

path. The wildly popular song “My Way,” most famously sung by Frank Sinatra, nails this mindset. The lyrics glorify our ability to do life on our own terms, but let’s face it—we have neither the wisdom nor the knowledge to pull it off successfully.

Our human bent also resists taking risks. We prefer to play it safe, but God is anything but safe. In his book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, C. S. Lewis portrayed Jesus—God in the flesh—as Aslan, the great Lion. When Lucy learns that Aslan is the King and Lord of the whole woods, she asks Mr. Beaver, “Is—is he a man?” Mr. Beaver replies with this fitting description of Aslan:

“Aslan a man!” said Mr. Beaver sternly. “Certainly not.... Don’t you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion—the Lion, the great Lion.”

“Ooh!” said Susan, “I’d thought he was a man. Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.” ...

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver.... “Who said anything about safe? ’Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”⁵

The God of the Bible is unchanging yet unpredictable. He is unpredictable yet good. Growing strong in our faith means reaching the point of being comfortable with that. It means acting as Abram did—acknowledging God as our Master and assuming the posture of his servant. Doing so demonstrates faith in his goodness. It also demonstrates our willingness to follow his instructions, even without knowing all the details or the eventual outcome. When he gives us a directive, we sometimes just “do it afraid” in faith, believing that because our Master *Adonai* loves us, everything’s going to be okay, even if his idea of okay doesn’t align with ours.

Abram trusted *Adonai*, and he experienced a level of intimacy with God that few others in Scripture enjoyed. True to the Master’s word, Abram the servant received his promised heir when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:1–3) and became father to as many descendants as the number of stars in the sky (Deuteronomy 1:9–10; Nehemiah 9:22–23).

Before reading further, ask yourself these questions:

- *Can I honestly say that God is my Master?*
- *Can I honestly say that I am his servant, ready and willing to say “Yes, sir,” no matter what he asks of me?*
- *If not, why not? And what needs to change so that I can enjoy friendship with God?*

Meet Wendy, Servant of God

On one occasion when Gene and I led a team of volunteers to Romania, we brought two seventy-pound duffel bags filled with donated supplies: T-shirts, underwear, personal hygiene products, and toys for children and youth who were living with life-threatening illnesses. These contributions came courtesy of Sew on Fire, a Canadian nonprofit ministry founded by Wendy Hagar, a woman who lives out the truth of who *Adonai* is.⁶

When Wendy was five years old, she placed her faith in Jesus for salvation; and although she remained steadfast in her commitment to him, she eventually grew bored and wanted to go deeper, to experience God in more intimate and powerful ways. She chose to pursue him by fasting for forty days, during which time she prayed, “God, make me more effective in your kingdom.”

A year later, Wendy, a mother of two, heard a missionary in her church speak about the plight of orphans and abandoned children in the former Soviet Union. As the offering plate passed, she sensed the Holy Spirit saying to her, *Donating money to the orphans’ cause isn’t enough. I’m requiring more of you.* After the service, she visited the missionary’s display in the foyer, where she saw cloth bags containing handmade overalls and mittens for needy children. *I can make these too,* she thought.

Before the day ended, Wendy—who disliked sewing—promised to stitch 100 baby overalls, 100 pairs of mittens, and 100 gift bags, which she

planned to stuff with 20 items each. The next morning, she bought nearly 200 yards of brightly colored cloth for the bags. For the baby overalls, she bought 160 yards of diaper flannel on sale and dyed it burgundy, green, and blue. When she started buying dozens of nearly new baby T-shirts from local thrift stores, cashiers and fellow shoppers asked why she needed so many. “They’re going to orphanages,” she would reply. Catching her enthusiasm, many of them in turn asked, “How can we help?”

Within two weeks, donations began arriving at Wendy’s home. Mounds of fabric, bubble gum, balloons, pencils, pens, coloring books, crayons, shampoo, soap, slippers, sewing kits, tissue boxes, and more overtook her spare bedroom and spilled into other rooms and the garage. Teens, adults, and seniors—including both familiar faces and absolute strangers—showed up to sew, sort donations, and stuff bags. When a well-known national ministry offered to share a fifth of their 5,000-square-foot warehouse rent-free, Wendy gratefully accepted.

Wendy’s hunger to know God more fully led her down a path she would never have anticipated, but she was committed to following the Master’s directives then, and she remains dedicated today. Has it been an easy journey? Not always. She admits occasionally complaining and wishing she could stay home rather than work in a hot warehouse. When she catches herself in that frame of mind, she reminds herself to change her whining to worship. She recalls 2 Chronicles 16:9—“The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him”—and she thanks *Adonai* for strengthening her to fulfill her calling.

Sew on Fire has come a long way from the day Wendy bought her first bolts of fabric in 2000. The organization now logs about two thousand volunteer hours monthly and occupies a 9,000-square-foot warehouse that costs \$13,500 per month to rent. *Adonai* prompts people to donate to the cause, and Sew on Fire has never missed a payment.

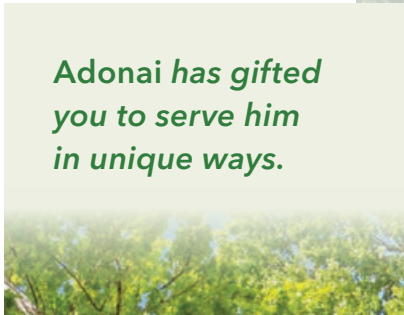
Adonai also provides for specific requests the ministry receives. On one occasion, a contact in the African nation of Malawi asked for running

shoes, sandals, and flip-flops. Wendy shared the request with a neighbor who owns a shoemaking business, and he donated six pallets of the requested items.

Wendy can tell story after story about the Master equipping her with everything she needs—down to the tiniest detail—to do what he has asked. “God’s heart places importance on caring for widows, orphans, and the poor,” says Wendy. “That’s what Sew on Fire does, so the Master provides what we need to serve him, supplying us with volunteers, financial supporters, warehouse space, and mission teams who carry the supplies to their recipients.”

You might be thinking, *I could never do a forty-day fast, and I could certainly never do the work that Wendy is called to. I guess that means I’ll never experience friendship with God.* If those kinds of thoughts are running through your mind, then rest assured that you can bring them to a screeching halt. There’s no doubt your journey will look different from Wendy’s, because you’re not her clone. *Adonai* has gifted you in unique ways, and he’ll lead you along a path made for you, not for someone else.

Serving the Master might mean showing kindness to a prickly family member. Perhaps it requires taking a leave of absence from work to rest your weary self. Maybe it involves mentoring a younger believer or leading a small group or taking a course to upgrade your skills. It could mean saying “Yes, sir,” if he has asked you to dig a little deeper into your finances and give to someone in need. Or perhaps it means finding an accountability partner who will support you in your desire to conquer a negative habit, such as spending too much time scrolling through social media.



***Adonai has gifted
you to serve him
in unique ways.***

The principle that applies to all of Jesus’s followers—regardless of age, education, skills, gender, nationality, or anything else—is this: When we assume the humble posture of a servant who is committed to following

the Master's directives, the Master will do whatever it takes to provide whatever we need to do whatever he asks. We can trust him with every detail, because of who he is as manifest through his name *Adonai*.

Moses and *Adonai*

We've already talked about how Abram experienced God as *Adonai*, so let's look at how Moses, another Old Testament hero of the faith, did the same. Do you remember when Moses encountered *Yahweh* at the burning bush (Exodus 3-4)? In that moment, *Yahweh* appointed Moses to lead the Israelites out of their captivity in Egypt. The eighty-year-old shepherd responded by expressing feelings of inadequacy as he tried to deflect God's directive:

Moses pleaded with the LORD [Yahweh], "O Lord [Adonai], I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled."

Then the LORD asked Moses, "Who makes a person's mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say."

But Moses again pleaded, "Lord [Adonai], please! Send anyone else."

Then the LORD became angry with Moses.

EXODUS 4:10-14

I'll admit that I read this account multiple times before making sense of why "the LORD became angry with Moses." Finally I realized what triggered God's anger: Moses—God's servant—acknowledged God as Master but refused to follow his orders. Moses's words and his deeds didn't align. He said one thing but did the opposite.

Once upon a time, I gave one of my grandkids a task: "Pick up your toys, Sweetie," I said. My little sweetie scowled at me and said, "You're my

grandma, but you're not the boss of me." I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I knew she loved me, but on that occasion, she didn't want to obey me. I wonder how many times you and I have also behaved like a two-year-old: "You're my Lord [*Adonai*], but you're not the boss of me."

Thankfully, Sweetie changed her mind and decided to do Grandma's bidding after all. Moses did likewise. Well, not quite. He didn't do Grandma's bidding, but he cooperated after God arranged for Moses's brother, Aaron, to join him as codirector of the exodus from Egypt. Having Aaron work alongside Moses was not God's original plan, but by allowing it to unfold this way, God revealed his commitment as Master to provide everything his servant needed.

Moses experienced the Master providing for the mission in other ways too. Throughout the forty years that he led the Israelites in the wilderness, *Adonai* saw to it that their clothes and sandals never wore out (Deuteronomy 29:5). *Adonai* also fed them with manna every day (Deuteronomy 8:16), provided water for them to drink (Psalm 78:15-16), and protected them from enemy forces (Psalm 78:52-53).

What a privilege for Moses to see this truth about God's character, up close and personal. But better still was the depth of friendship that developed between Master and servant. Moses wasn't perfect, but his faith grew strong, and his relationship with God was nothing short of amazing.

***Adonai's* Commitment to His Servants**

Just as Moses witnessed *Adonai* work on his behalf when he surrendered himself as *Adonai's* servant, other biblical characters experienced the same:

- When Joshua obeyed *Adonai's* command to lead the Israelites into the promised land, he watched *Adonai* defeat their enemies, one after another (Joshua 1:1-3; 21:43-45).

- After *Adonai* appointed David to become Israel's next king, David experienced *Adonai's* protection when jealous King Saul tried to kill him (1 Samuel 16:1-13; 18:10-12; 23:14).
- When a drought came upon Israel, the prophet Elijah followed *Adonai's* instructions to go to Kerith Brook, where *Adonai* sent ravens to bring him bread and meat each day. When the brook dried up, *Adonai* sent Elijah to a widow who gave him water and bread (1 Kings 17:2-16).

Thousands of years later, *Adonai* remains the Supreme Master worthy of our complete and unconditional allegiance. Because of his commitment to our well-being, we can trust him to provide us with everything needed to grow closer to him and stronger in our faith. Here are a few examples that illustrate how *Adonai* does this:

1. ***Adonai* supplies wisdom:** As a teenager, I worked at a pizza takeout restaurant on weekends and during the summer. When I wasn't sure how to fill an order, I asked my supervisor for the answer. I'm sure my questions sounded trite to him, but he always told me what I needed to know, and he did so gladly. He wanted me to do well, so why would he do otherwise? The book of James says, "If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking" (James 1:5). Our Master wants us to succeed in fulfilling his directive to honor him in our relationships and other pursuits. He wants us to thrive, so why would he do anything else but supply wisdom when we ask?
2. ***Adonai* gives strength:** David wrote, "You, O Lord [*Adonai*], are a God of compassion and mercy.... Look down and have mercy on me. Give your strength to your servant; save me, the son of your servant" (Psalm 86:15-16). David was in a situation where "insolent people" were opposing him (verse 14). No doubt we can all relate to David's need

for strength on one level or another. God is the source of all strength and, as our Master, is responsible to share his strength with us according to our need, so we not only survive but thrive despite our challenges. Bible teacher Kay Arthur said, “So many times we say that we can’t serve God because we aren’t whatever is needed. We’re not talented enough or smart enough or whatever. But if you are in covenant with Jesus Christ, He is responsible for covering your weaknesses, for being your strength. He will give you *His* abilities for your disabilities!”⁷

3. **Adonai grants freedom:** The psalmist who penned Psalm 116 wrote, “O LORD, I am your servant; yes, I am your servant, born into your household; you have freed me from my chains” (verse 16). Satan wants to own us by holding us captive with the chains of secret sins, self-destructive habits and addictions, toxic thinking, and toxic relationships. But *Adonai* purchased our freedom with the blood of Jesus that was shed for the forgiveness of our sins (Colossians 1:13–14). If you belong to Jesus, your Master has redeemed you and set you free. And now “you do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). You are no longer a slave to sin; you are a servant of *Adonai*, the living God, who treats all his servants with love, mercy, and kindness—and even makes them his friends.

This list barely scratches the surface of what our Master, *Adonai*, has done and continues to do for you and me. What other things can you add to this list? Take a moment to brainstorm.

Jesus as *Adonai*

To help our faith and our relationship with him grow strong, God gave us his written Word—the Bible—to tell us what he is like and to demonstrate how living from the truth of who he is makes all the difference. God also sent Jesus, the Word of God in human flesh

(John 1:1, 14), to teach this same truth through Jesus’s words and deeds, which have been recorded to serve as our example. In the New Testament, two Greek words specifically communicate that Jesus is *Adonai*—Lord and Supreme Master:

1. **Despotēs** denotes an ultimate ruler or authority.⁸ This word is used to refer to Jesus in 2 Peter 2:1, and it is usually translated as “Lord” or “Master”: “There were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master [*despotēs*] who bought them.”
2. **Kyrios** is used most frequently to refer to Jesus and is usually translated as “Lord.” It means “he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, lord; the possessor and disposer of a thing.”⁹ In John 13:13, the word is used when Jesus refers to himself: “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’ [*kyrios*], and you are right, because that’s what I am.” This statement, spoken to his disciples, affirms Jesus’s claim to be God, who is Lord and Master over everything.

Jesus also used *kyrios* to refer to himself when speaking to the Pharisees on one occasion. He referenced Psalm 110:1 in order to prove his divinity as *Adonai*—Lord and Supreme Master:

Surrounded by the Pharisees, Jesus asked them a question:

“What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?”

They replied, “He is the son of David.”

Jesus responded, “Then why does David, speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit, call the Messiah ‘my Lord’

[kyrios]? For David said [in Psalm 110:1],

‘The LORD [kyrios; Yahweh in the original Hebrew] said

to my Lord [kyrios; adon in the original Hebrew],

Sit in the place of honor at my right hand

until I humble your enemies beneath your feet.’

Since David called the Messiah ‘my Lord’ [kyrios], how can the Messiah be his son?” No one could answer him. And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

MATTHEW 22:41–46

As Supreme Master, Jesus could have come to earth to assume control over every person living at the time. Instead, he exchanged that role for “the humble position of a slave” (Philippians 2:7). Throughout his three-year ministry, Jesus confirmed this position in many ways. For example, he said he came to earth do his Father’s will (John 4:34; 6:38; 17:4), and he demonstrated ultimate surrender when he “died a criminal’s death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8) and “purchased our freedom” from sin and death (Galatians 3:13).

Jesus’s example of submitting to his heavenly Father turns life upside down for us. God wants us to give him control, and he has every right to expect us to respond positively because of who he is—“Lord [*kyrios*] of all lords” (Revelation 19:16). Someday, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is indeed Lord and Supreme Master over all (Philippians 2:9–11). Why wait until then when we can do it now, exchanging slavery to sin (John 8:34) for “the freedom of God’s grace” that *Adonai* offers (Romans 6:14)?

But there’s even more. Like God the Father, Jesus, too, speaks plainly about his desire to make his servants his friends. In John 15:15 he says to his disciples, “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (ESV).

How Shall We Respond?

Earlier in this session, I mentioned that, as believers, we might sometimes be guilty of calling Jesus our Lord but giving little thought to what that name truly means. Kay Arthur defined it well: “*Lord* is more than a word; it indicates a relationship. The lordship of God means His total possession of me and my total submission to Him as Lord and

Master.”¹⁰ This relationship being what it is, we dare not behave like a two-year-old who scowls when her grandma asks her to pick up her toys. Neither should we dare to obey with a heavy sigh and a roll of the eyes.

So, what is the appropriate response? First, let’s remember that *Adonai* is on our side. He is for us, not against us. He promises to care for us and to provide everything we need so that his purposes for us are fulfilled. What more do we need to face life with courage and confidence? Responding to him with less than a hearty “Yes, sir” seems foolhardy.

Second, let’s align our words with our actions. Jesus warned, “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ [*kyrios*] will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.... I will reply [to those whose actions don’t match their words], ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws’” (Matthew 7:21–23). Keep in mind that saying you don’t know someone means you don’t have a relationship with that person.

Don’t get me wrong—I’m not inferring that salvation is based on works. Not for a minute. I *am* saying that sometimes we make Jesus our Savior without making him our Lord. We experience forgiveness of our sins, but we never experience the fullness of God’s power at work on our behalf until we surrender to him. In other words, having faith in Jesus for salvation is not just a “fire insurance policy”; it’s entering into a Master-servant relationship based on trust and love.

Last, let’s respond to the Master’s desire to have deep fellowship with us. The invitation offered to the psalmist applies to us too: “My heart has heard you say, ‘Come and talk with me.’ And my heart responds, ‘LORD, I am coming’” (Psalm 27:8). *Adonai* called Abram his friend. He invited Moses into his presence on Mount Sinai. And when Jesus’s followers submit to him as *Adonai*, he no longer calls them his servants; he calls them his friends.

Prayer

Adonai, I praise you for being my Supreme Master. Thank you that the precious blood of your Son, Jesus, has redeemed me from being a slave to sin. Now I am your servant, and you care so well for my needs. I want my relationship with you to grow strong, so please grant me even more trust in your goodness toward me. I pray for a heart that willfully and joyfully agrees to do whatever you say. I choose to serve you wholeheartedly because of your tremendous heart of love for me. In Jesus's name, amen.

Points TO Ponder

1 Read Isaiah 6:1-8.

- Describe Isaiah's vision. What do the details reveal about *Adonai's* supremacy?
- How does Isaiah respond to what he experiences?
- How does *Adonai's* supremacy influence your understanding of his right to expect your full obedience?

2 Read Judges 6:11-27.

- What broad directive does the Lord give to Gideon? (verse 14)
- Describe Gideon's response. What name does he use to address God?

- How might having an understanding of *Adonai* as your Master help you to obey, even if it means “doing it afraid”?

3 Read Judges 7.

- What compelled 22,000 men to return home?

- Compare with Numbers 13:25–14:4. What experiences did the majority in both stories miss because of their fear?

- Recall a few instances when obeying *Adonai*’s directives brought blessings into your life.

4 Read Acts 9:10–18.

- Who interrupts Ananias one day, and what does he say?

- With what name does Ananias address God, and how do his actions in verse 17 reflect the name’s meaning?

- What pattern do you see in the answers to questions 1-4? Summarize it in a sentence or two.

5 Read Nehemiah 4:7-18.

- Describe the desperate situation God's people faced and how they felt.

- What directive did Nehemiah give to them? (verse 14)

- Describe how *Adonai* acted as Lord and Supreme Master in this situation. How does this insight strengthen your heart today?

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for more author insights about
the name *Adonai*.

