SURFACE CHURCH

THEOLOGY

KNOWING THE NATURE OF GOD

Discipleship 101 · Part 2 · Phase One · Nine studies



Nine Studies on the Nature of God

Part 1 gave us the syllabus. Part 2 turns it into individual studies. We begin with theology, the study of God, because everything else in discipleship rests on who we believe God is.

01 **What Is Theology?**
Knowing God and the facets of His nature

02 **God Reveals Himself in Phases**
Elohim, El Elyon, Adonai, and the name LORD

03 **Godhead & Manifestation**
What these words mean, and what they reveal

04 **Monotheism**
One God, and what He required of Israel

05 **The Trinity**
The word, Tertullian, and the shape of the doctrine

06 **Who Is the Lord?**
Isaiah 9:6, 1 Timothy 3:16, John 14, Colossians 1

07 **The Seven Spirits of God**
The fullness of the Spirit before the throne

08 **The Name Is the Access Point**
Jesus leading us to the Father

09 **Cultivated Theology**
Scripture and experience held together

ONE

What Is Theology?

Theology is the study of God: who He is, what He is like, and how He relates to the world. Before we can follow Him well, we need to know Him well. Discipleship begins with God Himself.

As we study His nature we will meet His facets, the different aspects of who He is. Each one shows us something true, and none contradicts another. God is not one thing on Monday and another on Sunday. He is whole, and knowing Him is the heart of the life Jesus offers.

> **And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.**
>
> John 17:3 · ESV

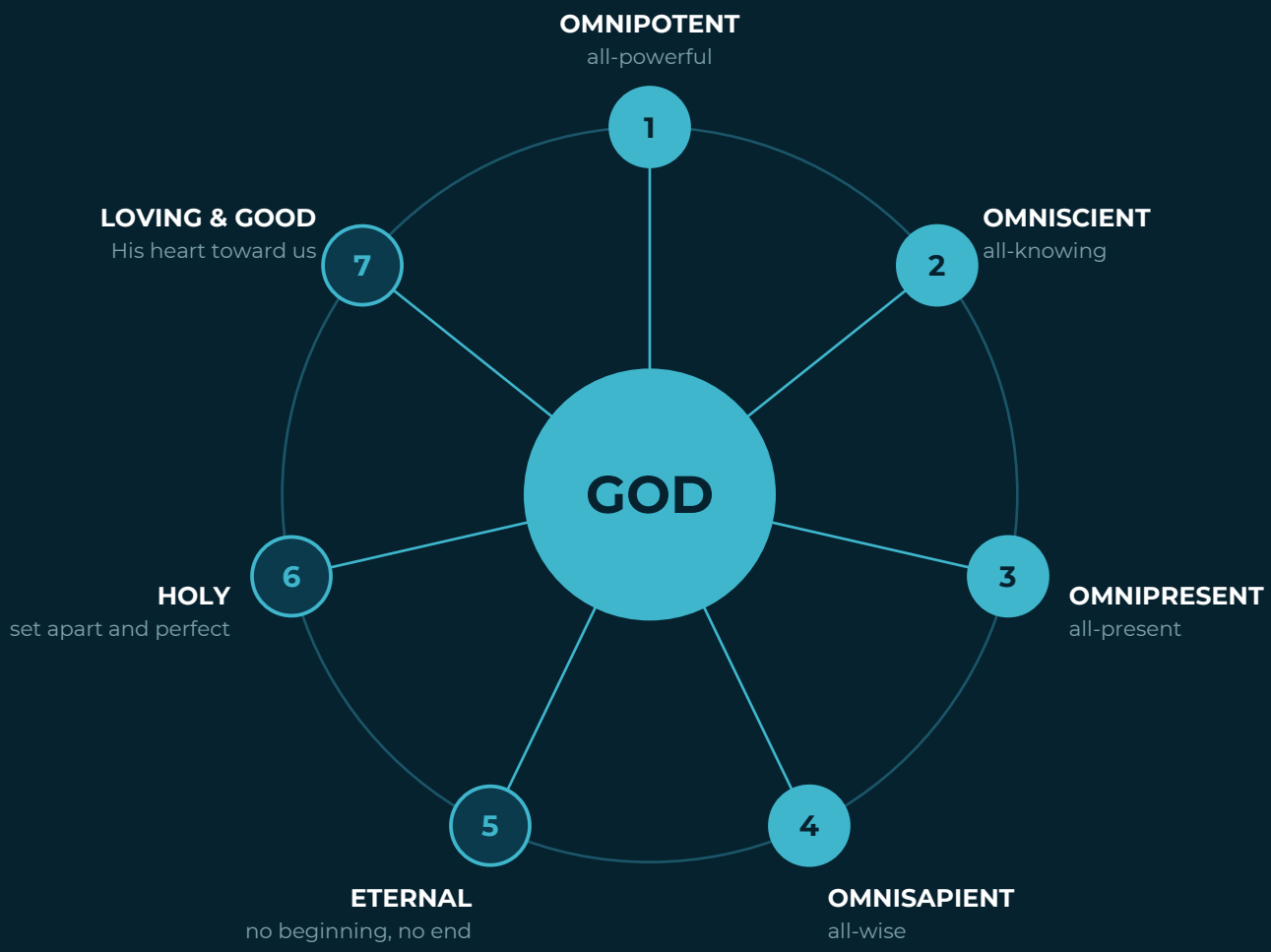
REFLECT

Which facet of God have you leaned on most? Which have you neglected?

PRACTICE

Read John 17 slowly this week and underline every phrase that tells you something about God.

The Facets of God



The four “omnis” (1–4) **Other classic facets (5–7)**

These are some of the classic ways Christians have described God’s nature. They are facets of one God, not parts of Him.

The Four “Omnis”

Omni is the Latin word for all. Four facets of God begin with it.

1

OMNIPOTENT

ALL-POWERFUL

omni + potens, “powerful”

“Nothing is too hard for you.”

Jeremiah 32:17 · ESV

2

OMNISCIENT

ALL-KNOWING

omni + scientia, “knowledge”

“His understanding is beyond measure.”

Psalm 147:5 · ESV

3

OMNIPRESENT

ALL-PRESENT

omni + praesens, “present”

“If I ascend to heaven, you are there!”

Psalm 139:8 · ESV

4

OMNISAPIENT

ALL-WISE

omni + sapientia, “wisdom”

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!”

Romans 11:33 · ESV

> Knowledge and wisdom are not the same. Omniscient means God knows everything. Omnisapient means He always knows the right thing to do with it.

God Reveals Himself in Phases

God did not reveal the fullness of who He is all at once. Throughout scripture He reveals Himself in phases, name by name and season by season. In the beginning He is Elohim, the mighty Creator. To Abraham He is El Elyon, God Most High. And Abram calls Him Adonai, Lord and Master. Each name was true. None was the whole picture.

In Exodus 6:3 the Lord tells Moses that He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by His name the LORD (rendered Jehovah in older English translations) He had not made Himself known to them. Then, in Jesus, the revelation reaches its fullness. There is always more of Him to know.

> **In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.**
>
> Genesis 1:1 · ESV

> **I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.**
>
> Exodus 6:3 · ESV

> **Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,**
>
> Hebrews 1:1-2 · ESV

REFLECT

Which name or facet of God has been revealed to you most clearly in your own journey?

PRACTICE

Read Genesis 1:1, Genesis 14:18-20, and Exodus 3:13-15 and write what each shows you about God.

DIAGRAM · STUDY 02

The Unfolding Revelation of God

1

ELOHIM

God, the mighty Creator

The first name we meet: the God who creates.

Genesis 1:1

2

EL ELYON

God Most High

Possessor of heaven and earth, known to Abraham through Melchizedek.

Genesis 14:18-20

3

ADONAI

Lord and Master

Abram speaks to God as the Lord and Master of his life.

Genesis 15:2

4

EL SHADDAI

God Almighty

The name by which He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Exodus 6:3

5

YHWH · JEHOVAH

The LORD, I AM

Revealed to Moses, a name the fathers had not known in this way.

Exodus 3:14-15; 6:3

6

JESUS

God with us, the fullness

In these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.

Hebrews 1:1-2

The gold bar under each step grows as the revelation of God grows.

Godhead & Manifestation

Godhead is an older English word for the divine nature, or deity. It names what God is, His essential being, rather than pointing to one person. When Paul says that in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells, he is describing the Godhead.

Manifestation means to make visible what was already there. When God manifests Himself, He does not become something new. He reveals what He has always been. Jesus is the Father made visible, and He manifested the Father's name to His people.

> **For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,**
>
> Colossians 2:9 · ESV

> **I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.**
>
> John 17:6 · ESV

REFLECT

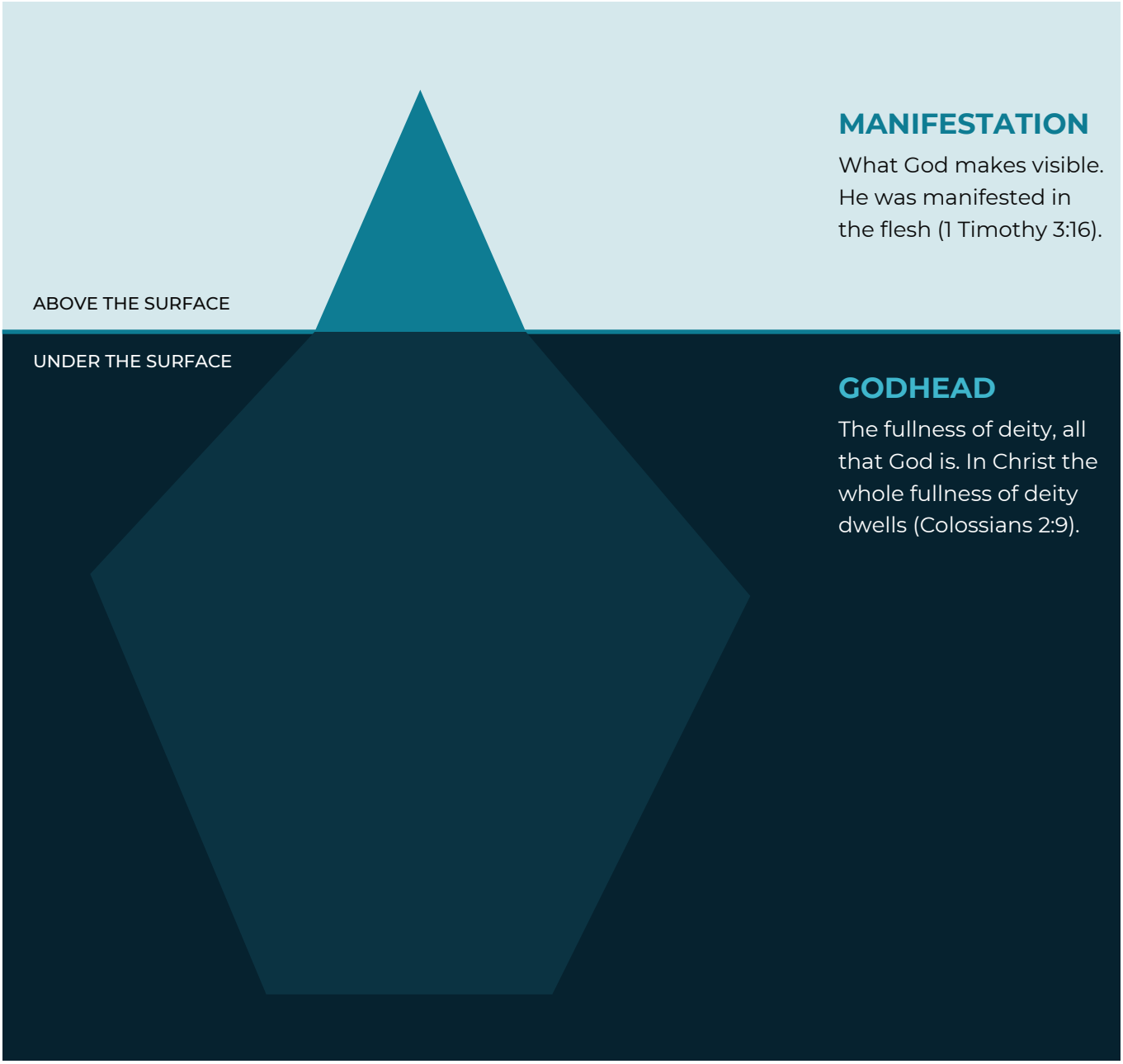
Where have you seen God make Himself visible in your own life?

PRACTICE

Write Colossians 2:9 on a card and carry it with you this week.



What We See and What Is True



Manifestation shows us the Godhead. It does not shrink it. What we see of God is real, and there is always more beneath the surface.

Monotheism: One God

Monotheism comes from mono (one) and theos (God). It is the belief that there is only one God. Israel came out of Egypt and lived among nations that worshiped many gods. The Lord required something different of His people: worship of Him alone.

The Shema, named for its first word in Hebrew (“hear”), became the central confession of Israel. Everything we say later about Jesus and the Spirit must be said inside this truth. There is one God. One God does not mean a lonely God, and that leads us to the Trinity.

> **Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.**
>
> Deuteronomy 6:4 · ESV

> **You shall have no other gods before me.**
>
> Exodus 20:3 · ESV

REFLECT

What quietly competes for the place that belongs to God alone?

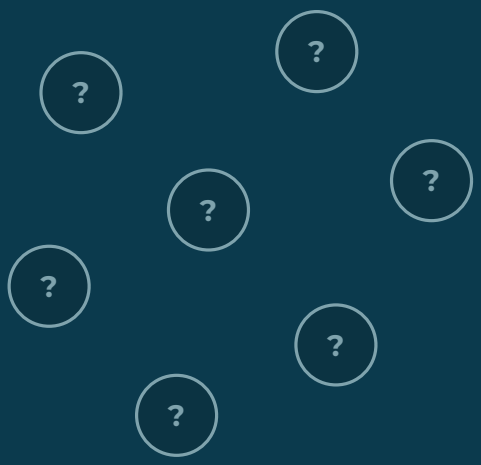
PRACTICE

Pray the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) aloud each morning this week.

From Many Gods to One

THE WORLD AROUND ISRAEL

Many gods, many altars



ISRAEL'S CONFESSION

One God, worshiped alone

THE LORD IS ONE

THE COMMAND

"You shall have no other gods before me."

Exodus 20:3 · ESV

THE CONFESSION

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."

Deuteronomy 6:4 · ESV

Monotheism is not only a belief. It is a relationship of undivided devotion.

The Trinity

The word Trinity comes from the Latin trinitas, a joining of “three” and “unity.” A church leader from North Africa named Tertullian, writing around the year AD 200, is the first to use the word in Latin. He described God as one substance in three persons.

Tertullian did not invent the truth. He gave language to what scripture already shows: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit named together and worshiped as the one God. The church later affirmed this at the councils of Nicaea (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381). The word came later, but the reality was there from the beginning.

> **…baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,**
>
> Matthew 28:19 · ESV

> **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**
>
> 2 Corinthians 13:14 · ESV

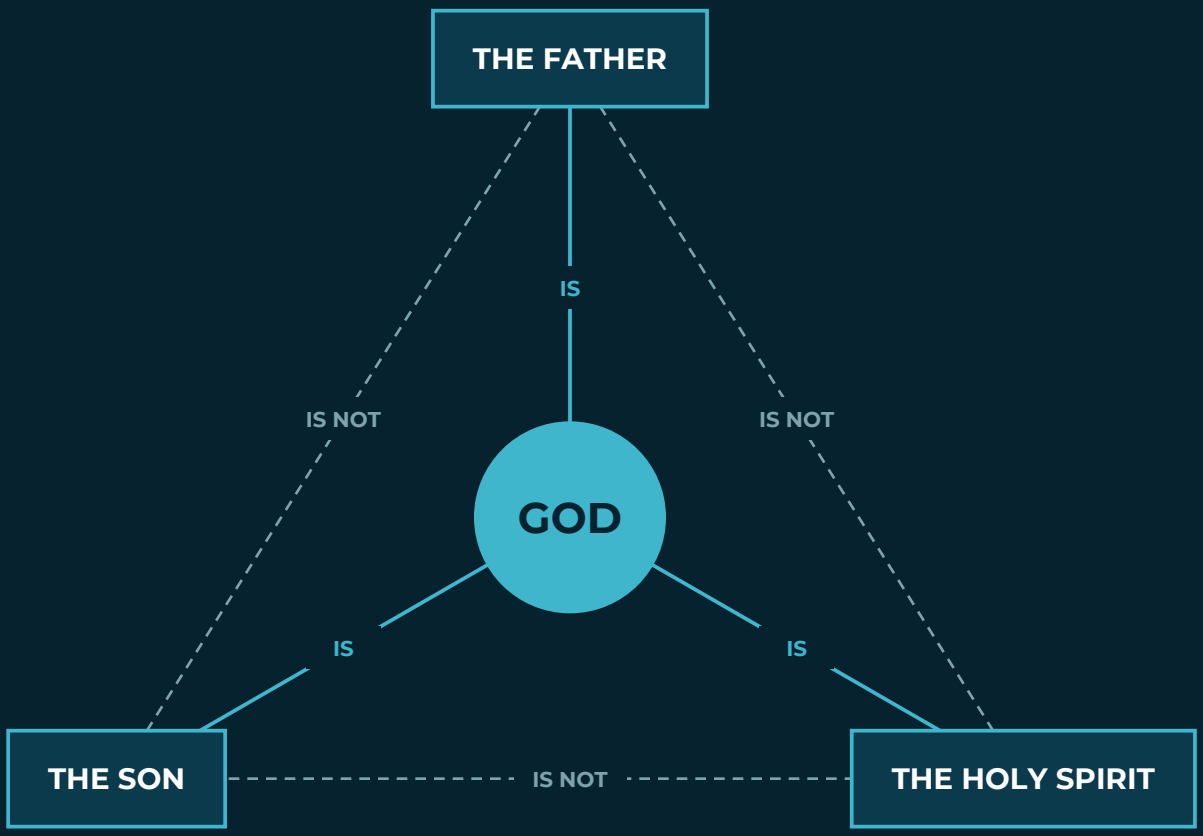
REFLECT

Why does it matter that God is one in essence and three in person?

PRACTICE

Read Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 and note where Father, Son, and Spirit appear together.

Three Persons, One God



ONE IN ESSENCE

There is one God, not three gods.

THREE IN PERSON

The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father.

An old picture of the doctrine, sometimes called the Shield of the Trinity.

Who Is the Lord?

Scripture does not leave us guessing about who the Lord is. The Old Testament promises Him, the New Testament reveals Him, and Jesus Himself says that to see Him is to see the Father.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6 · ESV

Jesus said to him, "...Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

John 14:9 · ESV

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

1 Timothy 3:16 · ESV

I and the Father are one.

John 10:30 · ESV

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Colossians 1:15 · ESV

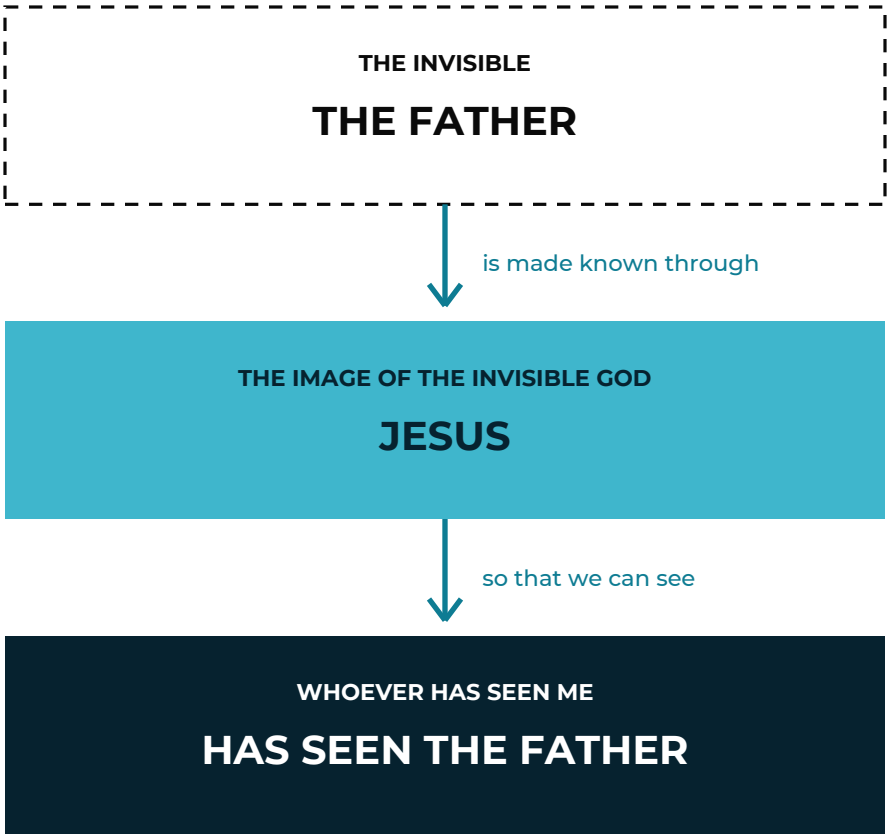
REFLECT

What changes when you believe that to see Jesus is to see the Father?

PRACTICE

Read one Gospel passage this week and write down what it shows you about the Father's heart.

Seeing the Father in the Son



FOUR WITNESSES

ISAIAH 9:6

Promised: Mighty God, Everlasting Father

1 TIMOTHY 3:16

Manifested in the flesh

JOHN 14:9 · 10:30

One with the Father

COLOSSIANS 1:15

The image of the invisible God

The Seven Spirits of God

Revelation speaks of the seven spirits of God before the throne. Many readers connect this with Isaiah 11:2, which describes the sevenfold fullness of the Spirit of the Lord resting on the Messiah. In scripture, seven often signals completeness.

This is not seven separate gods, and it is not a break from monotheism. It is one Spirit in the fullness of His work, the same Spirit who rested on Jesus and now fills His people.

> **And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.**
>
> Isaiah 11:2 · ESV

> **...and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,**
>
> Revelation 4:5 · ESV

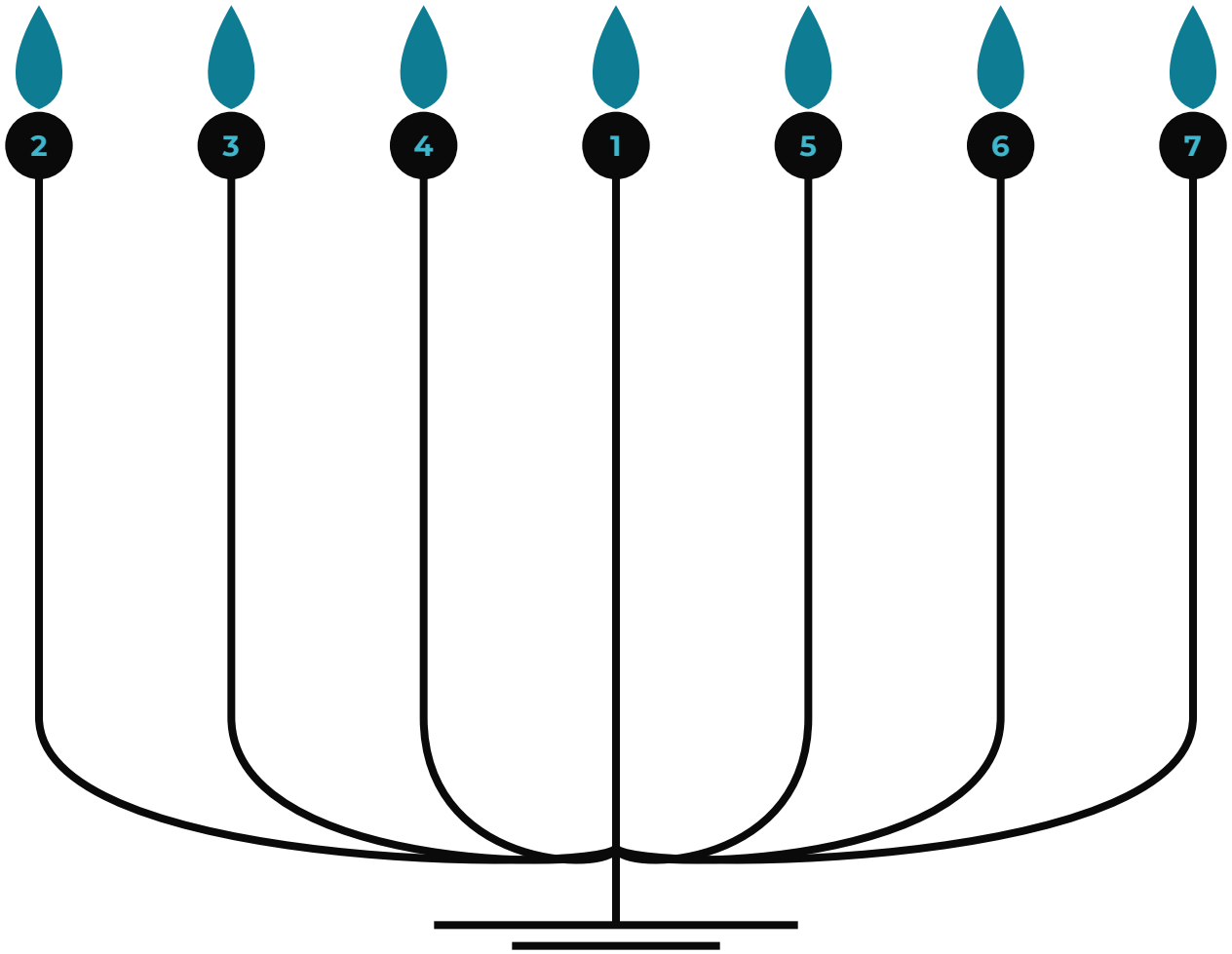
REFLECT

Which expression of the Spirit do you most need in this season?

PRACTICE

Read Isaiah 11:1-5 and pray through each expression of the Spirit by name.

The Sevenfold Spirit



1. Spirit of the LORD
2. Wisdom
3. Understanding
4. Counsel
5. Might
6. Knowledge
7. Fear of the LORD

One reading of Isaiah 11:2 and Revelation 4:5. The Spirit of the LORD with six expressions of His fullness.

The Name Is the Access Point

In scripture a name carries a person's character and authority. Jesus said He came to reveal the Father's name. His name is the access point: the way into the Father's presence, and the way we are saved.

But Jesus was always leading us deeper. The name is not a formula. It opens the door so we can know the Father through the Son. The more clearly we see Jesus, the more deeply we understand the Father's heart.

> **And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**
>
> Acts 4:12 · ESV

> **Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.**
>
> John 14:13-14 · ESV

> **Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also."**
>
> John 14:6-7 · ESV

REFLECT

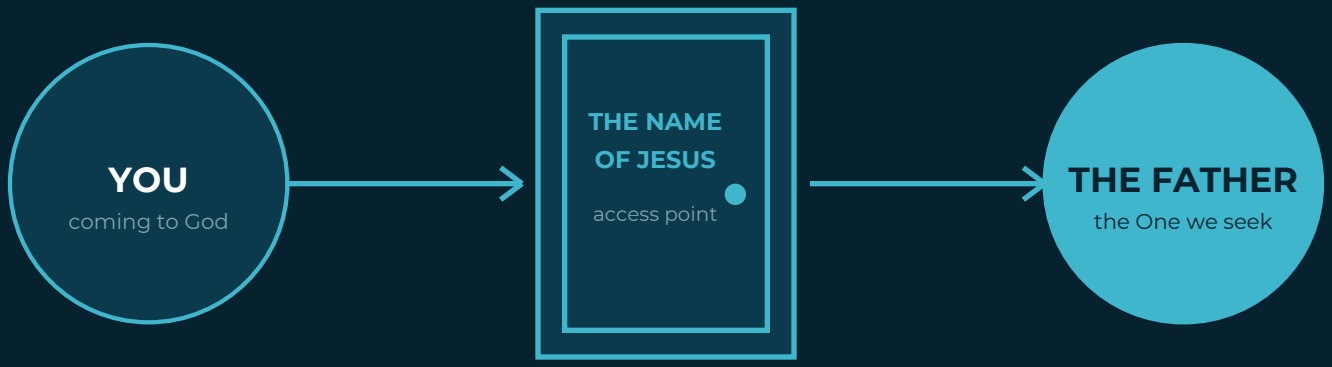
Do you use the name of Jesus as a formula, or as a way into knowing the Father?

PRACTICE

For three days, begin your prayers by naming who Jesus is, then speak to the Father.

DIAGRAM · STUDY 08

The Name Opens the Way



1

ACCESS

The name of Jesus opens the door.

Acts 4:12

2

RELATIONSHIP

Through the Son we come to the Father.

John 14:6

3

REVELATION

Knowing Jesus, we know the Father.

John 14:7

The name is the access point. The Father is the destination.

Cultivated Theology

Our understanding of God is cultivated in two ways, and we need both. Biblical nuance means reading scripture in context, noticing the language and the way passages relate to the whole story. Lived experience means meeting God in prayer, in trials, and in answered and unanswered prayers.

Experience without scripture can mislead us. Scripture without experience can leave us knowing about God without knowing Him. Held together, they produce a theology that is both true and alive.

> **I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;**
>
> Job 42:5 · ESV

> **Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!**
>
> Psalm 34:8 · ESV

REFLECT

Which season of your life taught you the most about God?

PRACTICE

Write one page titled “What I know about God” and test each line against scripture.

Two Pillars of Knowing God

A CULTIVATED THEOLOGY

knowing God truly and personally

BIBLICAL NUANCE

- Context
- Language and terms
- The whole story of scripture
- Where passages connect

\+

BOTH

LIVED EXPERIENCE

- Prayer
- Seasons and trials
- Answered prayer
- Walking with God over time

A FOUNDATION OF SCRIPTURE AND EXPERIENCE

Phase One Glossary

Theology
The study of God, faith, and how the divine relates to the world.

Facets of God
The aspects of God's nature, such as His holiness, power, and love.

Omnipotent
All-powerful (omni + potens).

Omniscient
All-knowing (omni + scientia).

Omnipresent
All-present, everywhere at once (omni + praesens).

Omnisapient
All-wise (omni + sapientia).

Elohim
God, the mighty Creator (Genesis 1:1).

El Elyon
God Most High (Genesis 14:18-20).

Adonai
Lord and Master.

YHWH · Jehovah
The LORD, the name revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:15; 6:3).

Godhead
The divine nature, or deity. What God is in His essential being.

Manifestation
To make visible what was already there.

Monotheism
The belief in one God (mono + theos).

Shema
Israel's confession, Deuteronomy 6:4. "Hear, O Israel..."

Trinity
One God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Tertullian
Early North African church leader who first used the Latin word trinitas.

Seven spirits of God
The sevenfold fullness of the Spirit (Isaiah 11:2, Revelation 4:5).

Access point
The name of Jesus, the way into the Father's presence.

END OF PHASE ONE

Know the God you follow.

Theology is not about collecting facts. It is about knowing a Person. Everything we have studied, from the facets of God to the Trinity, from the name of Jesus to the sevenfold Spirit, points to the same invitation: know Him.

In the next phase we move deeper into who Jesus is, and what it means that He is the image of the invisible God.

Pastor Cedric Cobb
Surface Church · Discipleship 101

