

BFF395 The Significance of a Name

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today.

Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I am up and Adam, but I'm not bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

Steve: I am going to talk about the name of one of my sons this morning, and let's pray before we start.

Father, thank You for the rest that we did receive. Thank You for the fact that regardless of how we're feeling or not feeling, You have not changed, and You haven't gone without sleep because the Bible says, "You neither slumber nor sleep."

Thank You for being the same this morning. Thank You that Your steadfast love and Your mercies are new every day, and they're the same every day because You don't change either. Help me as we speak today. Help Scott and I to work together and make a good call. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: Sandi and I were married on a Sunday afternoon. The sermon that morning was about Isaac. Because of that anointed sermon we both felt that if God were to bless us with a son, we wanted to name him "Isaac."

When I'm at conferences, people come up to me and ask me to sign their books and I usually ask them what their name means. When an Isaac comes up, I say, "Hey, what does Isaac mean?" And then the mom and the dad perk up because they know and the child usually knows.

They tell me, Isaac means laughter. I then asked why he was named Isaac and they'll say, "Oh, Sarah laughed." If you were to conduct a poll, most people would say that Isaac was named because Sarah laughed. Of course, this series of podcasts is on the importance of reading the Bible. I also assumed Sarah laughed until one year, as I'm reading my Bible, in Genesis which I'm going to read to you.

Genesis 17:15-19. "God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations. Kings of people shall come from her.' Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is 90 years old, bear a child?'"

"And Abraham said to God, 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before you.' God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.'"

That's the 17th chapter. Abraham has already had his name changed, and now Sarah is having her name changed, and they're about to have a son, and his name is going to be called Isaac. Now I'm going to read in the 18th chapter. "Jehovah appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw

them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, 'Oh Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash Your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that You may pass on, since you have come to Your servant. So they said, 'Do as you have said.'

"And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, 'Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes.' And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, set it before them, and he stood by them under the tent while they ate.

"They said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?' And he said, 'She's in the tent.' Jehovah said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?' Jehovah said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for Jehovah? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied it, saying, 'I did not laugh,' for she was afraid. He said, 'No, but you did laugh.'"

Both parents laughed at the impossibility of the task, but which one laughed first? You have to represent all the listeners, Scott.

Scott: Abraham.

Steve: Yes! Yet, most of us would say Sarah. In my current Bible reading I'm in Genesis 21, after Isaac was born, she laughed again. She said, "Everybody's going to laugh when they hear that Isaac is born."

Sarah does laugh about it a lot, but the first person that laughed when he was named was Abraham. I usually tell the kids that come to my booth, "Now go home and bet your pastor your tithes for the year," or something like that.

In scripture, names are significant. Abraham had his name changed, Sarah had her name changed, and their grandchild, Isaac's son, Jacob, as we know, would have his name changed from Jacob to Israel.

That family tree is the beginning of the promised people, the chosen people. It starts with Abraham, he's the father. He's also called the father of all those that believe. His name was originally Abram. Now it's Abraham.

Jacob, after he wrestled with an angel, gets his name changed to Israel, and that's how we know them to this day. Most people don't know Sarai, they know Sarah, because kings came out of her and whole nations came out of her. In scripture, names are significant. Names represent the nature of a person, and they're a big deal. For example, we know that God is holy. Isaiah 57:15 says, "Thus says the One who is high and lifted up, whose name is Holy." In Psalm 99:3, the Psalmist declares, "Let them praise Your great and awesome name! Holy is He!"

There's another significant man in the Bible who is Joshua. Joshua's birth name was Hoshea. "Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua." Hoshea means salvation, but Joshua, when you put the J-O in the beginning, means Jehovah is salvation.

Mary and Joseph were directed to name their son Jesus. Jesus in the Greek is similar to Joshua in the Hebrew, because they both mean Jehovah is salvation. Matthew 1:21, "She will bear a son, you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

If you have been listening to these podcasts for the last few years, you're going to notice that I'm going to use the word "Jehovah" to represent God's personal name. I will give you a reason why I'm doing that, which is part of this episode. "Elijah" means "Yah is God" as "Yah" is the personal proper name for God and "El" is God. Yah is a shortened form of "Yahweh."

Notice that many of the prophets and men of God have I-A-H at the end of their name, which is very similar to Yah. The prophet Isaiah means Yah is salvation. "Yasha" means "salvation" and Yah is the name of God.

Here's why I like to refer to God as Jehovah. We know the four consonants of His name are Y, H, V, H in Hebrew, and when translated in English would be J, H, V, H. We know these consonants, we just don't know what the vowels are. In Exodus 20, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments. The third commandment, engraved by the finger of God, is about His name.

"You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain, for Jehovah will not hold Him guiltless, who takes His name in vain." The word vain means empty, worthless, having no substance, value, or importance. We must avoid taking His name, which is special, holy, amazing, personal, proper and treat it as a common word or title like Lord, that's my conviction.

Personally, when I read a command that tells me clearly what not to do, like "Don't take my name in vain." I like to turn it around and focus on what I can do. The opposite of vain is important, significant, having value, sacred.

I want to think highly of God's name. I want to honor it as very special. In Malachi 3:16: God takes note of people who esteem His name highly, and He writes their names down in a book. Here's what it says, "Those who fear Jehovah spoke with one another. Jehovah paid attention and heard them. And a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who feared Jehovah and esteemed His name." This is something we can do to counteract taking it as common or no importance or vain.

I know that most of our listeners are committed Christians, and we might be tempted to think, "People are going to think we're Jehovah's Witnesses." I'm sorry, but I'm not letting that group, which I believe is not accurate, corrupt God's name any more than I'm going to let other words, that the world tries to corrupt, change their meaning.

For example, the rainbow is a sign of a promise. It's not what the world says. You get my idea. Esteeming or honoring His name is the opposite of taking it in vain. Jesus echoes this sentiment when He teaches His disciples how to pray.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." Another way to translate this phrase would be: "Our Father in heaven, may Your name be esteemed as holy." (Matthew 6:9) As you read through Scripture you'll notice many instances of God's people praising God's name.

Psalm 103:1: "Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

Now you are aware that I like to make a distinction between Jehovah and Lord. Many translations, like the ESV or the NASB, represent Jehovah, with LORD, putting all four letters in caps.

They're making a distinction between LORD (God's personal proper name) and Lord the title. God's personal name, JHVH or Jehovah is used over 6,000 times in the Bible. If you speak Hebrew, you would say YHWH, and with the vowels "a" and "e" pronounce God's name "Yahweh." But if you take those Hebrew letters and translate them into English, it could be "JaHVeH" or "JoHoVaY" or "JeeHoVeh." We don't know what the vowels are, but I'm going to say Jehovah because this is what translators have figured out is pretty close.

The root word for these consonants that we get, the J, H, V, H in English, though the "Yod," "Heh," "Vav," and "Heh" in Hebrew. Take these root letters and look them up on "BibleHub." We think it comes from a verb, which means "to be" or "to become" or "to become known." In Exodus 3:13 and 15, when Moses meets God on the mountain at the burning bush, Moses said to God, "Behold, when I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say, 'What is His name? What shall I say to them?'"

"God replied to Moses, 'I am Who I am. Say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you.' God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you. This is My name forever, My name to be remembered throughout all generations.'"

I like and appreciate the intimacy that God exhibits when He reveals His name to His people. LORD, even if it's all in caps, is still a title. It's like Mr. or Sir, and it can be applied to almost anybody. A title implies distance in the relationship, whereas Jehovah or Yahweh is a personal name and fosters a sense of closeness and a desire to be known.

Even though I'm older, I don't like it when people call me "Mr. Demme." I don't like it when they call me, "Sir." Nobody calls me Lord, so that's no problem. When I'm at conferences, I'm Steve. The kids in my neighborhood call me "Mr. Steve," which is nice because it's my personal name. I don't want them calling me "Hey, Big Cheese, hey, Goliath, or whatever" because I'm the biggest guy around here. I want them to know me as Steve or Mr. Steve because that's who I am. That's what my name is. I want to be known by my name.

I've also noticed how important it is to my neighbors when I learn their names. I write down my neighbors' names when I meet them. I pray for my neighbors. I love them by

praying for them. I learn their names. There's a closeness. There's a sense that we know each other when you say, "Hey, Jeff, how's it going?" "Hi, Matt."

One of my neighbors accused me of creating community. They said, "You know, Steve, you create community because you get to know people, you learn their name." In Exodus 6, "There's only one Jehovah. God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am Jehovah." I like that, "I am Jehovah. I appeared to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, El Shaddai, but by My name, Jehovah, I did not make Myself known to them."

Something changed when He met Moses on the mount. He introduced Himself, He gave Him His name, and He said, "This is a new thing here. These other guys knew me as God Almighty. You might say the big man, and you know my name. I am that I am. Exodus 34, " Moses cut two tables of stone like the first, and he rose early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai as Jehovah had commanded him, and he took, in his hand, two tablets of stone. Jehovah descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of Jehovah.

"Jehovah passed before him and proclaimed, 'Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers and the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation.' And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped."

Scott: I was struck with how many times it says to praise His name. I did a quick search and it's all through the Psalms, "Praise His name. Bless His holy name." It's everywhere. If you put that phrase in BibleGateway, it comes up around 22 times, but I know there's a host of other ones.

There's so much power in His name and you think of people, there are scenes and literature and movies and whatever, where just at the sound of someone's name, it strikes fear in the hearts of His enemies. There's so much power in a name when you actually respect it properly.

Steve: Yes. I have to add this. If you think about the fact that it probably means something similar to I am, or who will be, or I am that I am or just I am, I think that's why when Jesus says many times, especially in the Book of John, "I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the good shepherd."

In Greek, you need to have those two words, egó, which means I, and eímai, which means am. There are a couple instances where egó eímai are found that are significant. The first one is in John 10, where Jesus says, "I and the Father are one." As soon as He said that, the Jews picked up stones to stone Him.

Steve: They knew what He was saying. I and the Father are one. He spelled it right out. I am the same as the Father. I think it's significant in the eighth chapter Jesus declared He was before Abraham. The listeners also picked up stones and Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced that he would see My day. He saw it and was glad." The Jews said to Him, "You're not 50 years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was I am."

Then the next phrase is, "They picked up stones to throw at him." When he was said "Before Abraham was, I am," He was identifying with Jehovah, which means "I am." What made me think of this is when you just said when someone says their name, and everybody here fear and trembling."

Consider John 18:3–6, "Judas having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?' They answered Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I am.' Judas, who betrayed Him, was standing with them. Jesus said to them, 'I am.' They drew back and fell to the ground."

He was asserting, He was identifying, He was affirming the fact "I and the father are one," just like he did in the 10th chapter, just as he says, before Abraham was born, "I am." Powerful stuff.

Scott: Well, in that scene, you almost get the sense that they might have stoned Him or just killed Him right there if they weren't so terrified. It's like Jesus let the Pharisees have a pass in the earlier scenes, let them get irate and pick up stones to throw at him. But the power was always there.

Steve: Absolutely. Something changed at that point because it sounds like He calmly said, "I am." And they to the ground. They got a glimpse. We're messing with God.

Let's Pray: Thank you, Father, for Your name. Thank You for revealing your name to us. There's a sense when your name is under attack. Even the New Testament, people...It bothers me sometimes they say in the name of the Lord and different things. It's Jesus and it's Jehovah, it's Yeshua and it's Jesus, and it's Yahweh. You have a name, you've revealed your name to us, and you've given us mouths to say it.

It's a privilege to let those words come off of our tongue and help us to not take it in vain, deliver us from that, and help us to esteem your name, love your name, and all the different variations of your name.

Jehovah, our righteousness, Jehovah Shammah, and Jehovah who sees Jehovah Roy, Jehovah Shalom, and all these wonderful names, just like you said, "I am the good shepherd. I am the door of the sheep. I am the bread from heaven." It's God. You're the same from Genesis to Revelation. Give us an appetite for loving your name, esteeming it highly. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scott: Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme." If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.