

What's in a name?

By Sandi Michon

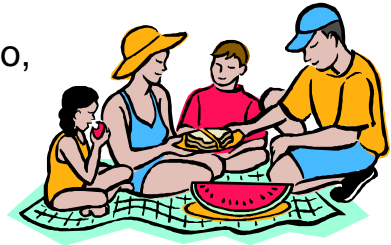
“Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me.”



That adage is clearly out of touch with reality. How many of us can recall the damage done by cruel name calling? Therapists deal with the damage even years later.

Names matter. We're hurt by bad names, feel loved by affectionate names, have authority through titles with our names, and feel honored when people remember our names.

Many parents take great care in choosing names for their children – unlike the heavyweight boxer George Foreman who names all his sons George! (It's either incredible ego, or complete lack of imagination!) For us, a family name frame hangs in our kitchen as an identity reminder. My husband Ron's name means, “enlightened”, mine means “helper of mankind”, our son Shane's name means “God's gracious gift” and Amanda means “beloved of God.”



Names matter. The Bible says a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches (Proverbs 22:1) which attaches reputation to our names. It is awesome to know that our Good Shepherd calls each of His sheep by name. (John 10:3) Biblical names are very significant. Often Scripture explains, “he shall be called _____ because...” Sometimes the names are less than flattering. Jabez means “pain or sorrow” in I Chronicles 4:9. Can you imagine being called to dinner, or introduced in public? Nabal means “foolish.” In other references, Adam means “man, or red earth” and Eve means “live giver.” Esau was the first “Harry – hairy” in the Bible. Noah means “rest.” Biblical names are found everywhere. A bar in Springfield used to be called Ichabods – which interestingly means, “the glory of the Lord has departed from this place.”

What began my current fascination with name study was the book of Daniel. God's people were captured by the Babylonians in about 600 BC and exiled to faraway Babylon. Daniel and three Hebrew boys are selected for service to the king – chosen most-likely-to-succeed. We're all familiar with Daniel. Who were the three other young men? Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, right? It might surprise you to know that those were not their original names. The Babylonian authorities changed their names in the land of their captivity – even Daniel's. This is what they originally meant and how they were changed:

Daniel: God is my Judge

Beltshazzar: Whom Baal favors

Hananiah: Beloved of the Lord

Shadrach: Illumined by the sun god

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Mishael: Who is what the Lord is

Meshach: Who is little Venus

Azariah: Lord is my help

Abednego: Servant of Mego

Their original names were a constant reminder of their relationship to God. It is no wonder their captives wanted them to forget who they really were. The new names connected them to false gods! It must have been hard, but the foursome were diligent to retain their godly identities and it served them well. In the fiery furnace, the three Hebrew boys called on the God of their real names and He appeared as the Fourth Man in the furnace. Daniel called upon his God in the lion's den and the results proved that God really was his judge! In fact, Scripture shows that even the Babylonians used Daniel's original name.



Sometimes people changed their own names in Scripture. In the book of Ruth, Naomi ("pleasant") changes her name to Mara ("bitter") after the death of her husband and two sons.

It is very exciting when God changes people's names. Typically, God renames people after He has done a work in their lives, or just prior to a great commission. In the Old Testament, Abram becomes Abraham after God establishes a new covenant with Abram. Abram (father) becomes Abraham (father of a multitude) – even while his wife is still barren. I wonder if Abraham felt the name mocking him at times if he walked by sight and not by faith. Jacob (the supplanter), becomes Israel ("he shall be prince of God"). Jacob's new name came after wrestling with an angel and prior to the birth of the nation of Israel through his twelve sons. With Jacob's shady past, it must have been difficult to adjust to the new name.

Saul and Simon are some New Testament examples. Both were strong-willed men renamed to bow to the will of Almighty God.

Saul (the "requested") becomes Paul which means "small" after he meet the resurrected Lord on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. Simon ("listening") is dubbed Peter which means "stone". With Jesus being the "rock" – Peter was constantly reminded that he was a "chip off the old

block" so to speak. As a stone, Peter was to endure hardness and play a major role in the planting of the New Testament church.

Names matter. What does all this have to do with homeschooling?

Plenty.



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I don't know what all of your names are – or what they mean. I don't know what names you've been called at different times in your life. Sometimes the most damaging names are those we give ourselves. As our own harshest critic, we call ourselves inept, unattractive, unloved, afraid, stupid... the list goes on and on. If you don't find yourself inflicted with names from yourself and others, then the devil will try to project names on you. As I've watched other homeschoolers, I have often been barraged with projected names. I'm not creative, not organized, not diligent, not a good cook, a lousy wife and mother... you get the picture... As with Daniel and his friends, when the devil brings us into bondage, he attacks our identity in Christ. Just as Daniel had to keep reminding himself that God was his judge, we need to remind ourselves of who we are in Christ.

A quick look at Ephesians 1 contains our birthright with "God our Father" right up in verse two. This one chapter complements all of Scripture reminding us that we are: blessed (v.3), chosen (v.4), adopted (v.5), accepted (v.6), redeemed (v.7) forgiven (v.7) – and most of all – loved. Don't embrace the world's names for you. In fact, find out which one hurts the most, and study Scripture in that area and meditate on God's truth about you. Believe it!

On the topic of names, I've saved the best for last. The best name, that is – the name of Jesus Christ.

The term "name" is used 861 times in the Bible – and 108 times it is "the name of the Lord." I never noticed how many references there are to God's name. In Hebrew tradition, God's name was so sacred, it could not be uttered in full. I have a friend that always puts a dash for the "o" when she writes God's title. Psalm 148:13 says, "Let them praise the *name* of the Lord, who made heaven and earth excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. In Exodus 20:7, and Deuteronomy 5:11 we are commanded not to take the Lord's *name* in vain, and Leviticus 24:16 says that if someone blasphemes the *name* of the Lord, they shall surely be put to death! Lord's prayer: "Hallowed by thy *name*."

It's significant that we are to call on the "*name* of the Lord." In Genesis 4, after Seth had Enos, men began to call on the *name* of the Lord.

As we begin another homeschool year (or perhaps your first), call upon the name of the Lord. Check out why:

As we face our own homeschool giants...

I Samuel 17 (David to Goliath) Thou come to me with a sword, spear and a shield – **I COME TO THEE IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.**

Psalm 20:7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses: *but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.*

Psalm 124:8 *Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

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Proverbs 18:10 *The name of the Lord is a high tower, the righteous run into it and are safe.*

In Act 2:21 and Romans 10:13, we are to *call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.*

Colossians 3:17: And whatsoever you do in word or deed – *do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. (v. 23 says to do it heartily...)

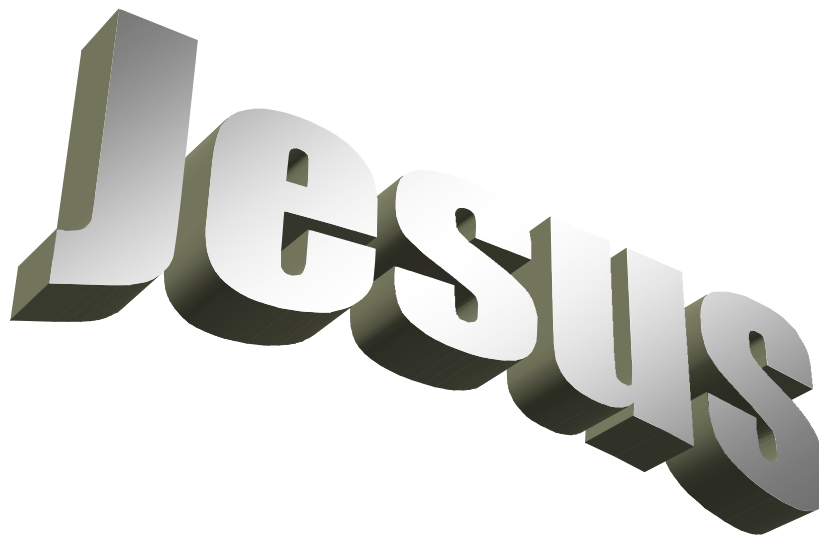
2Thessalonians 1:11-12 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the *the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you*, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2 tells us that God has highly exalted Jesus and given Him a name above every other name – and the day will come to fulfill verses 10-11: “That *at the name of Jesus* every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Psalm 34:3: “O magnify the Lord with me, and *let us exalt his name together.*” As His children, let Him give you a new name this year. He is faithful – He can make you faithful. He is strong – He can make you strong.

The Greek word for name is “onoma” meaning, “name, title, reputation.” The Greek lexicon adds this: “Onoma is also used to indicate the character described by the name or identification with the person bearing the name – to be identified with that person’s character and purpose.” Oh, to be occupied with God’s purpose in the power of His name!

As a Christian, and ambassador of Christ – I pray that I may live up to the “family” name.



Jesus