**IF GOD NAMED YOUR CHILD**

***Remember Who You Are***

Over the past couple of years here at Northwest there have been quite a few babies born. When these children came it was the natural thing to give them a name. It would be very awkward to spend the rest of their lives saying, “Hey, you, come here.” Or, you could do like I do to cover my brain-freeze as I forget a kid’s name and simply say, “Hey cutie, goochie goochie goo!” It’s better than being embarrassed by forgetfulness, right?

Naming your child gives them a handle that distinguishes them from their siblings and from other kids in the neighborhood, at school or in Bible class. So, we have names like Delroy, Chloe, Ayariakeneh, Eloise, Andrew, Esther, Rosaline, Kacie, Samantha, Henry, Oliver, William, Thomas, Callum, Sybil and … oh, what’s-his-name?

These names may or may not have deeper meanings behind them. Some are family names passed down for generations, perhaps from parents or grandparents. Others have a special meaning due to the parents wanting their child to grow up to imitate someone they knew or loved. Still others are given Biblical names in hopes they will live up to that high calling. We never hear a child given the name Judas or Jezebel due to the bad reputation associated with it.

It’s fascinating to me that as we read the Bible we can sometimes see God giving names to the child, instructing the parents to call their offspring by a certain name. We all know that God told Zacharias and Elizabeth to name their child John (Luke 1:13,63). We also are very familiar with God telling Mary her child would be named Jesus (Matt. 1:21,25).

In the Old Testament we often find God naming certain children in order to teach a lesson. Abram was given the new name Abraham to show that he would become *“the father of many nations*” (Gen. 17:5). Jacob was renamed Israel and then told why, *“Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed”* (Gen. 32:28).

In less familiar stories we find God giving names to newborn children to instruct the Israelites. For example, he told Hosea to marry a harlot and then named his children for him. The first child was named Jezreel and then told why: *“For in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, And bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel”* (Hos. 1:4). When child two was born God said, *“Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, For I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, But I will utterly take them away”* (Hos. 1:5). Child three came and God said, *“Call his name Lo-Ammi, For you are not My people, And I will not be your God”* (Hos. 1:8).

Another fascinating event happened in the life of Isaiah. God told him he would have a son and was to give him a very peculiar name. Here it is: *“Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, “Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz; for before the child shall have knowledge to cry ‘My father’ and ‘My mother,’ the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria”* (Isa. 8:3-4). [Note: I suggested that name for our firstborn son but Benita vetoed that. She thought Ryan Paul was better. My thought was that when he learned to spell his name he would basically have learned the entire alphabet. Think of the nick-name options he would have had: Shal, Hash, or Baz. Oh well].

To be given names like Lo-Ruhamah, Lo-Ammi, or MaherShalalHashBaz might be bad enough, but when you see the meaning behind them it becomes far worse. It would be like the old country song by Johnny Cash in which the no-account dad named his son Sue in order to make him tough or die fighting. Some just get stuck with bad names.

Names have meaning when describing the character of a person. The apostles renamed Joses by the name Barnabas, which meant “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36). Simon was renamed Peter by the Lord to express the meaning of “rock” (Luke 6:14). But if God renames our children according to their character what would He call them? Would God call my son Luke Warm? Or, Ben Bad? Or would He call my daughter Ima Sinner? I pray not. I would hope He named my child Will Power or Linda Hand to express their determination or benevolent spirit.

When His own Son was prophesied to come into the world the Lord said these immortal words: *“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”* (Isa. 9:6). He became all of those things, and much more. He was also named *Jesus* because He came to “*save us from our sins*” (Lk. 1:21). But did you know that God also prophesied our new names too? Read it for yourself and weep… for joy:

*“The Gentiles shall see your righteousness and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the LORD will name”* (Isa. 62:2).

Do you know what that “*new name*” is? I can think of only one name that became “new” which the mouth of the Lord has named. “*And they were called* ***Christians*** *first at Antioch*” (Acts 11:26). Peter reminds us, “*If any man suffer as a* ***Christian*** *let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God*” (I Pet. 4:16). King Agrippa was almost persuaded to become a “***Christian***” by Paul’s preaching (Acts 26:28).

My name Richard Earl Lanning might not mean much to most folks (although when I heard my mom yell “Richard Earl” it meant I was in big trouble), but to be named by my God as “Christ-ian” is an honorable name to live up to. I was adopted into the family of God and given a new name to wear with pride. Everyday we step out the door to face the world I pray we will keep in mind what many Christian parents said to their children when they left the house to go into the world, “Remember who you are!”

CHRISTIAN. I love that name. God, I thank you for giving it to me. – Rick