

God has a Name | Exodus 34:5-8 Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: that each person bring an area of struggle or burden to the group so that the group may pray that God's name would be ultimate in that area.

Sermon Refresher: Just as our intuitions and assumptions about so many things can be off, so can our intuitions about God. Although most of us tend to see God as distant and impersonal, God has a personal name and has given us that name. Knowing God's name not only changes the way we think about God but especially the way we relate to God.

Icebreaker: Pick one of these questions to get to know each other better:

- What is a nickname you've been called? What's the story behind it?
- If you were to go to your high school reunion, what is one thing that has changed about you that people would be surprised by?
- What's something about you that most people would be surprised to know?

Discussion:

1. What are some common intuitions/assumptions that people in our culture have about God?
2. Read Exodus 33:18-19. In the Ancient Near East culture of the Old Testament, names were significant. Knowing someone's name was to know something essential about them. Names often had significant meanings or linked to a significant family heritage. (Some examples: Adam means humanity. Eve means life. Abraham means father of many nations.)

In light of this, why might it be significant that when Moses asks to see God's glory, God reveals his name?

Exodus 33:18-19

¹⁸ Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

¹⁹ And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence."

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3. We often think about and relate to God based on his titles (God, Lord, Father, etc.). What's the difference between a title and a name? What do we miss out on in our relationship with God when we only relate to him in terms of a title?
4. God's name is the Hebrew word YHWH (pronounced "Yahweh"). It is a mysterious name that means "I am" or "He is." Dave mentioned that this name refers to who God is: he is the eternal one, the self-existent one, the source of all being and life, the continuous presence which we live in. But the name also refers to how God relates to us: God is personal, God is relational, God is with us, God is love. How does knowing God's name and the meaning of it change the way you think about God?
5. Read these famous Psalms out loud with God's name, Yahweh, inserted in. Remembering the meaning and significance of his name, how does this change the way you relate to and experience God through these Psalms?

Psalm 23:1

The LORD (Yahweh) is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

Psalm 27:1

The LORD (Yahweh) is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The LORD (Yahweh) is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalm 136:1

Give thanks to the LORD (Yahweh), for he is good.
His love endures forever.

6. Dave talked about how many of us have dysfunctional taste buds that love cheap, processed, sugary foods and have little taste for what is nutritional. That is a good analogy of why we don't like to pray - our spiritual taste buds are dysfunctional. What are some ways our spiritual taste buds are dysfunctional when it comes to prayer? What are some things we could do to re-train our spiritual taste buds to love prayer?

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7. Read Matthew 6:9.

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[Jesus said] "This then is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed (ultimate) be *your name*, . . ."

Relating to God on the basis of his name, Yahweh, changes the way we pray. One of the best things we can do to change the way we relate to God is to pray the Lord's Prayer. Specifically, Dave mentioned that if we will bring an area of life that we are struggling with or burdened by, and bring it under this prayer, "Your name, Yahweh, be ultimate in _____," this will change our perspective.

Sharing and Prayer:

What is one area of your life that has been a struggle or a burden recently? How would it change your perspective on God and/or that area of life if you spent time praying "Your name, Yahweh, be ultimate in (that area)?"

Everyone pray "Your name, Yahweh, be ultimate in _____" for the person on their left and specifically for the struggle or burden they mentioned.