

“Identity: You Have Been Called by Name”

(Part of the Identity Series, and a follow up the “Job Identity” lesson)

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Katie McRee

Key verses:

Isaiah 43:1

Objectives:

- to begin to understand the power of what happens when God speaks.
- to learn about the significance that names hold for God.
- to wonder what it means to belong to God.

This is part of a series that will be presented throughout the school year, and a follow up to the “Job identity” lesson that was posted in February of 2016. The lessons can all stand alone, but if you are looking for more resources, you can certainly go back and start the series with the original Job lesson.

The Set up: Minimal

The Plan: (Book and Look are flipped for this lesson because it works better!)

- Hook: Name Games (10 mins): Playing Peek-a-Who or another name game of your choosing.
- Look: He Who Must Not be Named (5-10 Mins): watching a clip from Harry Potter where they explain about “You Know Who.”
- Book: Called by N-me (10 mins): learning about the value that God puts on names and what that means for us.
 - **This section is a little theologically complicated and will be best understood by the youth if you have familiarized yourself with the ideas before long before you get started!**
- Took: Acrostic Identity (5-10 mins): Creating acrostics for our names to help think about the scope of what God has claimed by speaking our names.

The Supplies:

- Copy of lesson
- A large sheet/tarp (or other supplies if you choose a different name game for the hook)
- AV equipment to watch the Harry Potter clip
- Paper and pens

(Open in prayer, announcements, and any other start of gathering traditions)

Peek-a-Who (Hook, 10 mins)

In this section, you can play any NAME game that you would like. You are NOT looking for a getting to know you game where you learn odd facts about each other... all you want for this section is something where you use names. I have provided directions for Peek-a-Who because you can play it for however long you would like.

- Play a name game, preferably long enough that everyone's name is used at least once in the game. My suggestion is Peek-a-Who. Here are the directions:
 1. Divide your group into 2 teams and review everyone's names.
 2. Between the two teams, raise a large sheet (tie it to something, or have a partner help you). All players should be sitting on their respective sides so that the other team cannot see them.
 3. To start the game, each team will send one player up to the sheet where they will stand up facing the other team's selected player (kneeling works too).
 4. The leader will count to 3 and then drop the sheet.
 5. As fast as they can, the selected players must yell the name of the person standing across from them.
 6. The first one to name their opponent wins.
 7. You can play for points, or you can "win your opponent" over to your team.

Process/Discussion Question:

- How did you feel about that game? Was it easy? Hard?
- Was it surprising how hard it was to think of someone's name when you were put on the spot?
- How did it feel when someone forgot your name?
- How does it feel when someone forgets your name in real life, not just a game?
- Why is that so offensive?
- Why are names so important? Why do we feel so connected to our names?

Transitional Statement: say something like:

Names are important! Parents meticulously choose names for their unborn children, and it is almost always the first thing you are asked to share to identify yourself, whether in a social situation, going to the doctor, getting a drivers license, etc. It's a part of who you are!

Typically when we use someone's name, it is simply to identify them, but sometimes it feels like something more significant. Let's watch a clip from a movie that demonstrates the delicate nature in which some names make us respond...

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He Who Must Not be Named (Look, 5-10 mins)

In this section, we are watching a clip from “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone,” where Harry is first learning about Voldemort and why people are afraid to say his name.

I know... another Harry Potter clip!

- Show the clip from “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone,” where Hagrid and Harry are in Hogsmead and they are talking about Voldemort:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcFd8RNqKuA>

Questions:

- Who was this guy that they didn’t want to talk about?
- Why were they so afraid to say his name?
- Were they right in their belief that they shouldn’t speak his name?
- Are there any names in your life that you hold dear and only say with great respect?

Transitional Statement: say something like:

Voldemort was a REALLY bad dude! He was so bad, that no one wanted to say his name for fear that it would conjure up the evil that he embodied.

That seems a little crazy because we throw names around like it’s no big deal, but if you take away the evil element, the attitude that they have about Voldemort’s name is not too far off from the attitude that some have about God... do you remember the 3rd commandment? (Don’t take my name in vain) Note, that comes BEFORE not murdering someone... that’s pretty significant! And yet, we say “God” without a second thought! Let’s look at that a little closer and think about the importance of saying a name.

Called by N-me (Hook, 10 mins)

This section is tricky, and is really less about a single biblical passage and more about helping them understand a complicated theological truth. There are lots of different angles in which to discuss this, and you may have some understanding that is not touched on here, but whatever avenue you take, it will be important that you **spend some time BEFORE HAND making sense of the theology** so that you will communicate the details to the youth with ease.

Again, you can communicate these details however you would like, but my suggestion is to do a mini-lecture and end with the verse (Isaiah 43:1). **Here are some points to hit on during your lecture:**

- Because of the 3rd commandment, we know that God has asked us to hold his name with reverence... let's try and make some sense of that by starting at the beginning...
- If we think back to the actions that God took create the world, we can remember how he created light... he SPOKE it into existence. He literally said the words and there was light!
- Also, if you can remember how God created us, he BREATHED life into a pile of dirt and made man, thus giving us a piece of him, and making us in his image!!! And then he immediately NAMED his new creation.
- And what was the first task that God gave to man? NAMING all the creatures he had created!
- In other words, at the very beginning of our story, we learn that there is great power in God's VOICE and breath.
- We also learn that God believes it is important to name his creations. Names are important to him! In fact, to God, names are not just an identifier (like a more pleasant sounding social security number), but someone's name speaks to the essence of who they are as a person. That's why, several times in scripture, when someone's character or purpose changes significantly, God gives them a new name. They are a new creation, so they must have a new name!
- Now, if we combine the two truths that 1. There is power in God's voice, and 2. We were created in God's image, couldn't we deduce that there is power in our own voice? Not the HUGE power that there is in God's voice, but the tiniest bit of that same sort of power. That's why:
 - We are not to take the Lord's name in vain, and
 - There are still Jewish people who write the name "God" as "G-d."
 - It's almost like, in using the power of our voice, we are creating a tiny idol that is the essence of who God is!
- After getting through your "mini-lecture" (phew!) have everyone look up one verse and ask them what that it means in relationship to what we just learned. The verse is Isaiah 43:1. I have listed it here for your planning purposes:

- *But now, O Jacob, listen to the LORD who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine."*

Processing Questions:

- What does this mean in relationship to what we just learned?
- Why does it matter that God has spoken our name?
- Why should God's speaking our name cause us to not have fear?
- How does God saying our name claim us as his own?

Transitional Statement: say something like:

Did you get all of that? When God says our name, he's not just taking role or doing a head count, he is using the power of his voice to conjure up the essence of who we are! It's his way of saying, "I know you! I know ALL of you. I know you intimately... and you are mine! Do not be afraid."

Acrostic Identity (Look, 5-10 mins)

In this last section, the youth will be creating multi-layered acrostics out of their names.

- Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen/pencil/marker
- Explain that they are going to make a very simple acrostic to claim all the characteristics of who they are when God speaks their name. (I have attached a picture of one for "Katie" in case you need a reference.)
- Have them write the letters of their name vertically on the left side of their paper.
- By each letter, they should write multiple words that describe them, including the good and the bad! This can include personality traits, as well as physical ones.
- A few pointers:
 - Let them get creative with the spelling so they can fit the things that are true of them.
 - Let them use their phones to use an online thesaurus or to google, "adjectives that start with x."
- When they finish, have them share a few highlights of their acrostic with a friend, and then you can either put them on display in your youth room, or have them take them home

Close in prayer, thanking God for knowing us intimately, the good and the bad, and loves us so much that he has claimed us as his own. Ask him to help us remember the power that comes with being created in his image and the strength of our voice.

K

KRAZY

Kookie

Knowledgeable

A

Amused easily

Argumentative

Artistic

Agressive

T

Thinking

Tough

Talented

Trustful

i

Intense

Important

Inspiring

Industrious

INVALUABLE

E

Eccentric

Emphatic

energetic

EXULTANT

EARNest

Expressive