

God Treasures You and Calls You by Name

Names are important.

Most of us can

remember times as children when we waited hopefully to hear our name called as class lined up to head to lunch or a field trip. We very much hoped our name would be called when it was time for a game and team captains were choosing their teams. It was disheartening when we didn't hear our name called and



encouraging and affirming if we did hear it called. When playing "Red Rover," we listened for our name to be called as a signal that it was our time to take action: "Red Rover, Red Rover, send Jenny right over!" Names are important.

In film and in books we instinctively know that something very bad is happening when people cease to be called by their names. It is always the bad guys of some dystopian regime who start giving people numbers instead of names.

It is largely because we love our dogs and horses that we give them names.

When people call to greet us in public, even if it is someone we see fairly often, we are glad to hear them call our name: "Hi, Shannon!" When people who haven't seen us in ages recognize us and call us by name, we feel humble gratitude and affirmation to be remembered and to be remembered by name.

Notice that God calls to people so often by name. When he wakes the child Samuel, He doesn't say, "Hey, little boy!"; He says, "Samuel!" When God calls to Moses out of the burning bush, He calls Moses by name. When Gabriel appears to Mary, he speaks to her by name. When the angel of the Lord speaks to Joseph soon thereafter in a dream, He speaks to him by name: "Joseph, Son of David." On Resurrection morning, it is when Jesus speaks Mary Magdalen's name that she recognizes Him. When God overwhelms Saul/Paul on his way to Damascus, he speaks to him by name. When God speaks to Hagar in the desert

as she wanders in despair and thirst, He speaks to her by name, and she discovers that there is actually a real God, one who sees her and knows her name. He does not merely see the earth or nations or cities; He sees individuals. He sees, her, Hagar.

We often sigh when reading through a book of the Bible and come to a chapter containing a long genealogy. What can we possibly gain by seeing all these names? We know, of course, that we find out valuable things about who is in the lineage of Jesus and other points of significance, but I think the best response I ever saw was a commentator (I don't remember which one) who pointed out that genealogies show us that God knew each of those persons in the genealogy individually, knew them by name, knew them as persons, not items in a list. He knew their stories, their hopes, their fears. That's why their names are preserved. Many of these people may not have been well known in their own day or remembered in history by us, but they are well known to God, who calls them by name. For every name in a genealogy, there is a person for whom God could answer all those questions in online identity security questions. God knew each by name, and, as my brother would say, He knew the name of their first pet and the name of their first best friend.

Be encouraged that God knows you by name and that the very fact that you have a name is a reminder that He sees you as very valuable indeed.

--Sally Mahoney nee McKenney