

Questions God Asks Us

Chapter 4: What is your name?



Welcome

- What question or insight from the last gathering have you continued to think about or wonder about (if any)? Have the readings or discussion changed how you connect with God or with others in any way?

Opening Question

- How do you feel about your name? Is there a story or a special meaning behind why you were given that name?
- Do you have a nickname or another name that you are known by? Is there a story behind this name?
- If you were to choose a new name for yourself, what would it be? What is behind your selection of this name?

Responsive Reading – Psalm 139

One: O LORD, you have searched me and known me.

All: *You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.*

One: You search out my path and my lying down

All: *You are acquainted with all my ways.*

One: Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

All: *If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.*

One: If I take the wings of the morning

and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

All: *Even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast. Amen.*

Bible Text

Genesis 32: 22-32 (NRSVUE)

²²The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the

hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." ²⁷ So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸ Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans and have prevailed." ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. ³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, yet my life is preserved." ³¹ The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. ³² Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

Questions

1. What did you notice in the Bible reading or in the chapter? What spoke to you or surprised you? What resonated with you? What was a new idea?

Allow for a few minutes of silence as you gather your thoughts.

2. Have you ever "wrestled" with God? About what? In what ways can you identify with Jacob (for example, struggling with God, persistently seeking God's blessing, facing in the presence of God the truth about who you are and who you are called to be...)?
3. To be both blessed and transformed, Jacob had to be honest about who he was. What stops us from being honest with ourselves (and with God) about who we really are?
4. What does it mean to you that your new name is "God's beloved?" What passage(s) of scripture most enable you to experience and remember your belovedness? Share them with your group or check out these examples: Psalm 139: 13-14; John 15: 9; Romans 8: 14-17, 31-39; Ephesians 2: 10; Isaiah 43: 2.
5. How will you continue to reflect on God's question in the week ahead? What kind of inner change do you want God to bless you with? Would does it mean to you that your new name is "God's beloved?"

What's Next?

- At the end of the small group or between gatherings, spend some time in silent reflection using "Answering God's Question" at the end of the chapter.
- Select one of the texts on being God's beloved from question #4. Print out a copy and place it near your bed. Read this text, first thing every morning and at the end of the day as you prepare to sleep.

- Ask a friend to tell you what they know about the history of their name. Reflect on and talk about how to live out the hopes of your name.
- With your small group or on your own, watch the NOOMA video, *Name*, by Rob Bell. Ask Denise Floe to borrow a copy at dfloe@incarnationmn.org or look for it on-line.

Closing Prayer – *Share the date, location and reading for the next gathering*

Loving and ever-present God, when we awaken and when we sleep, you are there; in our striving and in our stillness, you are there; in our failure and in our success, you are there; in living and in dying you are there. We thank you for your enduring love that will never leave us and will always sustain us. Amen.

One: God is with you no matter what. Go, now, in God's presence and love. Amen.

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This outline is to be used alongside Questions God Asks Us by Trevor Hudson. Some of the questions and reflection prompts questions listed here also come from Questions God Asks Us.

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