

Things We Do With Names

Here at The Calling, we think a lot about the *things we do with names*. This is our current list. If you have a substantive addition to this list, please send us an email! Thanks.

- So...what is the first thing we do when a new human being is born into this world? The very *first* thing, often before the umbilical cord is cut? We give that precious new human being a *name*.
- Names mean things, and for less industrialized nations, naming is an important tradition. But even to Westerners like us, names have meaning. Often, names have a history and a purpose. "Leroy" for example, comes from the French "le Roi," which means *the King*. There are thousands of examples, and for the time it takes to type your name in a search engine, you can find out the meaning of almost any name.
- What is the *very* first thing we do when we meet someone? We learn their name and we tell our name. At every first meeting, whether in person, on the phone or even on the internet, the first thing we do to establish contact and begin a relationship is to exchange names.
- A piece of paper is worthless, but with the signature of a famous person it becomes an *autograph* worth hundreds or even thousands of dollars. That's because the signature connects the otherwise meaningless piece of paper to *the person who signed it*, conferring great value.
- Names mean a lot in terms of products and branding: how many times have you bought the "name brand" product because you trusted the brand's name? Often, we are unimpressed with products until we see the *name* on the computer, stereo, car...and we think "Wow...that's the *real* thing." We just know: that NAME means something, and doubts evaporate, because the name confers reputation and expectation.
- "Name protection" (aka copyright infringement, etc.) is a massive, multi-billion dollar enterprise. You are free to make your own brown bubbly soda and sell it to whomever you want, but if you slap the name "Coke" on your bottles, you are inviting a lawsuit. If you don't stop, you could land in prison.
- Corporations spend billions protecting their names, with legal departments hunting down illegal use of their brands, looking for product forgeries and prosecuting offenders. If you are selling an expensive Coach leather purse, you don't want anyone selling a cheap knock-off and damaging your reputation!
- WE PROTECT OUR NAMES because our names have value. Many in politics, entertainment and even religion have learned the hard way that it's vitally important to protect your name.
- If you know someone's name, you can find out everything about that person: birthdate, addresses, what schools were attended, what jobs held,

income, assets, driving record, criminal record...all of these and much more are easily available to a determined investigator equipped with a name.

- Your persona is embodied in your name, which is why we say, “keep my good name.” At the end of every President’s term, there is always talk about *legacy*. Speaking historically, what will Obama’s name come to embody? What does the name “Bush” bring to mind? How about “Clinton”? Famous NAMES enter our vocabulary and become nouns or verbs based on the actions or personalities of the people involved. Does anyone really wonder what the comedian means when he says “I’d love to get a Lewinsky!” And what a tragedy for the young woman whose name will be so remembered for that one act.
- A main target schoolchildren use to make fun of each other is their names. Do you remember the pain? Do your kids come home crying because someone at school made fun of their name? Did you carefully name your children to avoid such problems?
- No document becomes legal until someone’s name is attached to it. This is so simple and obvious, but whether it’s a check, a trust deed, a business deal or a nuclear disarmament treaty, until those NAMES get written on the paper, the paper is worthless and the deal it represents does not happen!
- When it’s a really important document (like a mortgage) the signature must be notarized, which means proving identity.
- Encountering the difficulties of *changing* your legal name proves how important names are to society. Brides know these difficulties, beginning with government-issued identifications, bank and credit problems, etc. For those with ‘non-traditional’ names (meaning at least first and last) operating in society can be trying, to say the least.
- Forging someone else’s signature is a crime.
- Names have the power of the person or thing named. For example, if you want an appointment to speak with the President, you need a powerful name. Bob from Nashville won’t get in the door, but the Queen of England will get right in.
- Your name is your representative or ambassador, for good or ill. There is a direct, immediate connection between the person and the name.
- Through ‘power of attorney,’ one person can ‘assign’ their name to another. The assignee then has all the powers of the originating person, and the assignee operates ‘in the name’ of the originating person.
- Names ‘have’ money. A simple piece of paper is worthless, but if it is a check in the name of a wealthy person, that worthless piece of paper has immense power because of the name on the check.
- Names tell us about our culture and our selves. Names (words) are the basis for our system of language and, indeed, thought. Consider the mysterious object-word, person-name connection. Words have been

- proven to shape our thoughts, and the reverse is also true. The Inuit (Eskimos) have 40 words for snow; Arabic has 30 words for brown, English has one (!) word for love, but over 200 words for the female breast. What and how we name things is a deep and fascinating study.
- Yahweh gave Adam and Eve three ‘jobs’:
 1. Be fruitful and multiply;
 2. Eat from every tree in the Garden but one;
 3. *Give a name to everything.*
 - Our names are so important to us that we go to great lengths to assure it is spelled and pronounced properly. The media expends incredible effort to make sure their articles and announcers communicate the correct spelling and pronunciation of people’s names. Today’s media won’t apologize for much, but a misspelled or mispronounced name will get an apology every time.
 - The Calling doesn’t recommend this kind of silliness, but there’s a good bit of fringe ‘stuff’ we do with names, like “Your name reveals your personality!” by assigning numbers to letters, counting them up and dispensing your fortune based on the results. It might be silly, but such behavior does point to the almost magical power of names and naming.

Here at The Calling, we think names are *so important that they form the basis of our entire social order*. And there is one Name that is so compelling, so empowering and so liberating that the overwhelming majority of humanity *doesn’t even know it*.

God’s Holy Name is YHWH. Even though this Name is now well known to Bible translators, because of ‘tradition’ most Bible printers refuse to put God’s Name in the Bible. Everywhere you see LORD in your Bible, it should say YHWH.

Is there a practical application to names and naming in all of this? Yes! The following practical application is simple and straightforward, yet overwhelmingly powerful:

- The Creator of the Universe has a Name; and
- In Exodus 3:14, He reveals that Name, and calls it “His memorial Name for all generations.”
- Every bullet point in this document could be re-written in terms of how it applies to God’s name, and how that Name applies to YOU!

That’s your homework from The Calling.