Explore:
What's in a Name?

At a Glance:
Jacob wrestled with a mysterious spiritual being all night, refusing to stop until he had received a blessing. The blessing he received was the name Israel. Students will explore a variety of cultural traditions associated with naming and explore what it means to receive a new name. Students will choose a name for a fictional hero or heroine based on the spiritual qualities they recognize as important.



Supplies Needed for Each Student:
- *What Determines a Name?* page
- *What's in a Name?* page
- blank paper
- pen or pencil

Directions:

1. Count the number of letters in your first name and find a partner whose first name has the same number of letters as your own. You may use a short version of your name or a nickname (e.g. Nathan (Nate), Katherine (Katie, Kate), etc.).

2. With your partner, discuss the following question: If you could change your name, what would you choose? Allow a few moments for discussion.

3. Gather students as a group. What new names did you choose? Is there a special reason why you chose your new name?

4. Do you know why your parents choose the name they gave you? (special meaning? relative? role model? friend?)

5. Distribute *What Determines a Name?* page to students and ask them to spend a few moments looking at the table on names in various cultures individually.

6. What stood out for you?

7. Read the "Christian Names" and "The Lord's Name" sections aloud with the group.

8. What does it mean to have the Lord's name added to your name? Some of our names come from the Lord's name, for example Christian, Christina, Jesus, etc. Can you think of examples of other names that have –el at the end or Jo- at the beginning? (e.g. Nathaniel, Josiah, Jonah)

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continued

9. Distribute *What's in a Name?* page. This list provides a sample of names that represent virtues or have special a meaning and come from the Word.

10. Pretend that you are going to write a story about a spiritual hero or heroine. Choose a first name and middle name for your main character that tells others the kinds of qualities that person has. You may choose names from the lists or other names you are familiar with. You can even make up your own unique name, using qualities that give it special meaning. The "Reasons for Naming" section suggests a variety of ways to approach this.

11. Distribute blank paper and pens or pencils.

12. Write the name of your hero or heroine and illustrate the qualities he or she would have and that you could aspire to in your own life.

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What Determines a Name?

Each culture has it's own naming customs. Here are some examples.

Native American

- Names are earned.
- A person may rename themselves or be renamed several times during their lifetime
- Names give power and responsibility.
- Names are so precious that they are only used during ceremonies.
- There are six classes of names: birth order, honor, special deed, nicknames, secret and spirit names.

Chinese

- Names always have one or two syllables.
- No new names can be created. Each name is represented by an existing Chinese character.
- Names are physical objects (mountain, rain) or concepts (happiness, wisdom).
- Siblings often have related names e.g. "water" and "river".
- Everyone in the same generation of a family has the same middle name.

Jewish

- A name is a statement of character and path in life.
- Giving a child a positive name means that the name will have a positive effect each time it is used.
- Naming a child after a relative who has died forms a bond between them.
- Babies receive their names during naming ceremonies.
- The Lord's name is too holy to be spoken.

Ghanaian

- Most first names reflect the day of the week on which a child is born.
- Akan, one Ghanaian language, has only 14 names: 7 for each day of the week for boys and 7 for girls.
- Names reflect birth order in a family.
- Some names reflect the circumstances of a child's birth, e.g. in a field, during a war, happy circumstances, after the father has died, premature.

Christian Names

In Christian cultures babies receive a Christian (first) name at birth. In the New Church and other churches it is customary for the minister to state a baby's name when he or she receives the sign of the cross on the forehead and chest during a baptism service. This act is a sign of the baby's initiation into the acknowledgement and worship of the Lord (*True Christian Religion* 682). When we hear a name we think of the qualities of a person who has that name. This is not surprising because saying a name brings the whole person to mind. This is why 'name' in the Word means 'the nature of' (*Arcana Coelestia* 2009). When we enter the spiritual world after death we will be given a new name. This name will be a unique expression of our qualities of love and faith (*True Christian Religion* 682).

The Lord's Name

Babies are baptized "into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Just as our names embody our qualities, the Lord's name embodies His qualities—which are everything having to do with religion (*Apocalypse Revealed* 81). We walk in the name of the Lord when we worship Him and follow His commandments. The prophet Isaiah tells us that honorable and faithful people will be given a new name by Jehovah (Isaiah 62:2). The new name stands for the changes a person makes along their path towards life in heaven (*Arcana Coelestia* 2009). This is the reason that Genesis tells us that Jacob was blessed with the name Israel. The –el at the end of Israel means "God", indicating that the quality Jacob represented had changed and that Lord was now part of that quality.



What's in a Name?



MALE		FEMALE	
Virtue Names		**Virtue Names**	
Victor	Liberty	Amity	Honor
Clement	Loyal	Charity	Hope
Concord	Ernest	Chastity	Mercy
Constantine	Noble	Faith	Prudence
Justice	Will	Felicity	Purity
Truman	Justin	Grace	Verity
Samples of Names in the Word		**Samples of Names in the Word**	
Adam—red	Jacob—supplanter	Anna—gracious	Leah—weary
Daniel—God is my judge	John—mercy of the Lord	Bethel—house of God	Miriam—bitter
David—loved	Luke—white	Dinah—judgment	Naomi—beautiful
Ethan—strong	Mark—shining	Eden—delight	Rachel—sheep of God
Ezekiel—strength of God	Matthew—reward	Elizabeth—fullness of God	Sarah—princess, mother of many
Gideon—destroyer	Nathan—gift	Hannah—gracious	Susanna—joy

Reasons for Naming	
Special deed	Physical object
Characteristic	Special meaning
Birth order	Belonging to Family
Day of birth	Concept
After a relative	Hope for future life
Where you come from	Positive effect

Adding the Lord's Quality to a Name
-el—means God, e.g. Bethel, Israel, Nathaniel
-h—spirit or breath of God, e.g. Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah
Jo—indicates Jehovah, e.g. John, Joanna, Jonathan
-yah- or –yeh—indicate the presence of Jehovah, e.g. Alliyah
-sha—saves e.g. Elisha

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