

What's In a Name?

It sounded great to start the New Year right by diving into God's Word, aligning ourselves with his Truth. Read some fun stories about our father Abraham, the near sacrifice of Isaac, Jacob and his twelve kids. These stories remind us of the messy human reality to which God has committed himself: the sibling rivalries, marital strife, infertility struggles. We see God actively being with his chosen people throughout their (many) mistakes. We're left feeling a little more comforted, thinking to ourselves, "Well, if God can put up with *that* messed-up family, surely he's still with me."

Then we get into the seemingly random readings in 1 Chronicles. You know the ones: straightforward, sparsely written sentences with lists of names. Most of the sentences don't even have a verb. There's literally no action going on. We are reading a seeming grocery list of names-fathers begetting sons and sometimes daughters. Unless you're planning on giving a new family member an obscure name ("Get the ball, Gatam! Not again, Naphish."), it's tempting to skim past these readings.

Yes, we said we wanted to read the entire Bible, but these are just *boring*. Why do we need to know the seemingly endless family tree of the ancient Israelites?

Here's why: As Christians, we are grafted into this family heritage. Abraham becomes our father, Isaac and Ishmael our brothers. We are reading our own faith heritage. I imagine the history nerds perked up a little at that fact, while many of us are still slogging through antiquated names. Stay with me.

Notice, for a moment, that all the siblings are mentioned. While we follow Isaac as our spiritual ancestor, Ishmael and

Abraham's other sons by his Keturah are listed, too. Each individual name is recorded in painstaking detail. This is when we discover how important each individual is in God's eyes. The book does not record only the family favorite and his descendants. We read the names of rejected Esau's descendants in as much detail as we read about beloved Jacob's many children.

In a time when it can seem that only the superstars get attention from God, the readings from 1 Chronicles remind us that in God's view, we're all his favorites. Not only does God stick with us in the messiness of life as we make it, but God sees us and cares for us equally. We're all named in God's book in the same amount of detail.

Think of the impact we could have in the world if we viewed others in equality with our favorites. Imagine what might happen if we recognized and treated each and every person-every name-we encountered as a valued and treasured child of God, ourselves included.

- Brittany Kooi

January 7th Readings

GENESIS 21:8-23:20

GENESIS 11:32

GENESIS 24:1-67

January 8th Readings

GENESIS 25:1-4

1 CHRONICLES 1:32-33

GENESIS 25:5-6

GENESIS 25:12-18

1 CHRONICLES 1:28-31

1 CHRONICLES 1:34

GENESIS 25:19-26

GENESIS 25:7-11

January 9th Readings

GENESIS 25:27-28:5

January 10th Readings

GENESIS 28:6-30:24

January 11th Readings

GENESIS 30:25-31:55

January 12th Readings

GENESIS 32:1-35:27

January 13th Readings

GENESIS 36:1-19

1 CHRONICLES 1:35-37

GENESIS 36:20-30

1 CHRONICLES 1:38-42

GENESIS 36:31-43

1 CHRONICLES 1:43-2:2