

## WEEK FIVE: A NEW NAME

Hours after our first son was born, the pediatrician after glancing at the name *Joshua Champ Rhodes* on his chart, joked: “Is that a family name, or is this going to be some great kid?” Our son’s middle name was meant to honor Joe’s grandfather, while we planned to call him *Joshua*, based on hours of discussion and pouring over birth name books. But when we brought our five-pound bundle of energy back to the small village where we lived as missionaries, the Eskimos insisted on calling him *Champ* and added their own middle name—*Boyukbuk*, loosely translated as *little big smoke*. The name *Champ* has stuck ever since, and to answer that doctor’s question, yes, he was a great kid and has become an even more amazing adult.

Ten years later, after a roller coaster of painful infertility, God surprised us with *Jonathan Samuel Rhodes*. Coming up with his name felt weighty and consequential in light of the miracles and abundant answers to prayer that characterized the adoption process. Champ wanted his brother to be called *Jonathan*, which means *asked of God*, and I chose *Samuel*, which means *sent by God*. Our second son is well into his third decade now, and I have never gotten over the wonder of God sending us such a gift.

Names matter, as you probably know from your own stories. But as important as they may seem when that baby is born, for followers of Jesus, that name is only temporary. In fact, Scripture tells us that not only has God adopted us into his family, but he has given everyone us a secret name, one we will not discover until we see Jesus face to face.

Here’s the backstory. In John’s revelation on the isle of Patmos, the glorified Christ stuns him by showing up amidst an arresting array of sights and sounds. Soon after, an angel begins to give John messages for the church. Hidden in one of these is this confounding promise:

To the one who conquers...I will give him a white stone, with **a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.**

Revelation 2:17

I’ve envisioned this moment through the years, and the mystery of it never fails to astound me. Jesus has given me a name, one so intensely personal that only the two of us will ever know it. He has inscribed it on a stone, one that is white with the wonder of forgiveness, purity and hope that awaits me in eternity.

This verse to me, sets off one of the most remarkable expressions of love God promises for each of his adopted children. It speaks of a deeply intimate connection, of a heart that knows and sees each one of us uniquely, and of his passion to show us just how much.

Names matter. One day, Jesus will reveal to you, and only you, the name he created and carved into stone, the name that he has kept close to his heart, waiting for the day when he will hand it to you personally. It is a new name, one that will confirm to you at last how treasured you really are.

Can you imagine what your new name might be? The Almighty God, in his sovereign wisdom is storing it for you, keeping it in the vault of heaven until you pass from this life to the next. Yet he has not left us completely in the dark. Scripture is replete with hints of how God sees you and me, of the relationship we have as his beloved; truths that perhaps he intends to tide us over until that glorious moment when he holds out our uniquely inscribed stone of identity. These are the truths that enrich our souls and sustain us through our spiritual journeys. This, then, will be our focus for these final devotionals.

## W5-DAY 1

### READ

Quietly read Revelation 2:17 and Revelation 3:12. Read them one more time, aloud if possible, hearing Jesus speak directly about you.

### REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What are the promises here?
- What does this reveal about God's character and ways?
- What does it say about you that perhaps you haven't realized or embraced before?

Pray:

- Spend a few minutes envisioning the scene when Jesus looks at you and hands you the white stone with your new name. Imagine what you will feel. Visualize that beautiful stone in your hand.
- Ask Jesus: *What is the treasure in these promises that you want me to know?*

### RESPOND

- Sit quietly with what God has shown you. Give thanks that he is making all things new, and that he has a new name only you and he will ever know. Praise him for his personal love.
- Ask God to show you what being a conqueror means for you today. Write it down.
- Review this experience one more time today—before a meal, after work, before bed etc.

## W5-DAY 2

### READ

Quietly read Ephesians 2:8-13. Read these one more time, aloud if possible.

### REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What was true of you in the past?

- What is true of you now?
- What do you think it means to be called God's workmanship?

Pray:

- The Greek word for "workmanship" is *poiēma*, from which we get the word "poem." It indicates that God sees you as his work of art, his literary masterpiece. Sit for a few minutes pondering this. Receive the truth of it from God's heart.
- Ask God: What do you want me to know personally for today about this?

#### RESPOND

- Sit quietly with what God has shown you. Give thanks that he is making all things new, and that he sees you as his precious work of art.
- Ask God to show you one thing way this might change how you approach this day (relationships, job etc.) Write it down.
- Review this experience one more time today—before a meal, after work, before bed etc.

## W5-DAY 3

#### READ

Quietly read 1 John 3:1-3. Read it one more time, aloud if possible.

#### REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What kind of love does God have for you?
- When will you be completely like Jesus?
- What event will catalyze this transformation?

Pray:

- Spend time in thanksgiving for all that it means to be loved as a child of God. Praise him for the radical transformation he promises when you see Jesus.
- Once again, envision that moment you will see Jesus face to face. Ask God: *What do you want me to know about the moment I will see you as you are?*

#### RESPOND

- Sit quietly with what God has shown you. Affirm by faith that he is making all things new, and that you are loved by a perfect Father. Write down one encouragement from today's readings.
- Review this experience one more time today—before a meal, after work, before bed etc.

## W5-DAY 4

#### READ

Quietly read Romans 8:31-37. Read this one more time, aloud if possible.

#### REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What does this tell you about God?
- What does this tell you about your current reality?

Pray:

- List each thing the Scripture says God has already done for you. Praise him specifically for each one.
- Take a piece of paper and make two columns. On the left side, write in large letters: Who or what can separate me from Christ's love? On the right side, list everything this passage promises CANNOT separate us from God's love. Offer a heart of worship as you sit before the Lord in light of these truths.

### RESPOND

- Read this question aloud: *What can separate me from God's love?* Then read aloud everything on the list you wrote above.
- Take that list and match it with a life situation you currently face. Read the question again: *What can separate me from God's love?* Then read aloud the list from your life situation.
- Review this experience one more time today—before a meal, after work, before bed etc.

## W5-DAY 5

### READ

Quietly read Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:16-22. Read them one more time, aloud if possible.

### REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- Who is God according to these passages? What do you see of his attributes, his character, his ways?
- What claim does Jesus make? What basis is there for such a claim? How did he fulfill these things?
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Pray:

- Spend some time praising God for every truth you see in this passage—about himself, about the world, about you.
- Ask God: *Lord, show me the ways you have already fulfilled these things in my life.* Offer a heart of worship for this.

### RESPOND

- As we come to the end of our *all things new* devotional, take some time to look back over each thing we have looked at; New learning (from Jesus), new pathways, a new song, new mercies and new name. List these on a card.
- Write beside each of these something God has shown you that you want to embrace more fully.
- For the next month, review your card every morning, asking God to continue to change your way of being in each of these things.