



MESSAGE GUIDE

JANUARY 19, 2025

EVERY NAME HAS A STORY-3: NAMING THE NEXT GENERATION



GENESIS 17:16-19; 18:1, 9-14A; 35:28-29

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If you have had children, you likely remember going through the process of picking out a name. You may have chosen a name for your child based on family tradition, or you chose a name from the Bible that has special meaning, or you picked out some names from the list of “popular baby names,” then narrowed it down until you found the perfect name for your child!

For some this process is fun and exciting, for others it may be exhausting and full of second guessing. It may be a lot easier for some parents if God were to swoop in and do what He did on a number of occasions in the Old Testament, where He took out all the mystery and just said, “And ye shall name him___.”

For example, in Genesis 17:19, God said to Abraham: “*Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac*” (**Genesis 17:19, ESV**). Done. Easy. Got it. Isaac it is! You want to name the next generation? No need to go to babynames.com, just have God call down from heaven and give you the name and then you can move on. But it’s not that easy, is it? And what does this have to do with us in this message—naming names, especially naming the next generation?

In our current sermon series, Every Name Has a Story, we’re talking a lot about names, and in so doing, we’re talking a lot about the stories from the names of people we see in Jesus’ family tree from Matthew 1. We’re discovering how names play a huge part in the story of Scripture and how God wants to include your name in His story.

1. DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU WERE GIVEN THE NAME YOU WERE GIVEN? WHAT WAS THE PROCESS YOUR PARENT(S) WENT THROUGH TO COME UP WITH THE NAME ___? OR HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE NAME OF YOUR CHILD OR CHILDREN?

Now, to get to the point of God giving Abraham the name of his son, Isaac—and what that means for us—we need to do a quick recap of the story. We begin with the opening line of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1: “*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers*” (**Matthew 1:1-2, ESV**).



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We discover the background to this short, little description of this genealogical launching pad in Genesis 17. It begins with where we left off from last week's message that God changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah, and then we come to God's promise to Abraham about Sarah: *"I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her"* (**Genesis 17:16, ESV**).

And in this holy moment for the future of the whole world, how does Abraham respond? *"Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?'"* (**Genesis 17:17, ESV**).

And do you blame him? Sometimes our human limitations prevent us from believing in the limitless God.

2. HAS YOUR HUMAN LIMITATION PREVENTED YOU FROM BELIEVING IN THE LIMITLESS GOD? WHEN HAVE YOU FELT GOD REVEAL SOMETHING TO YOU OR PROMISED YOU SOMETHING THAT WAS HARD TO BELIEVE?

Now, Abraham already had a son born to Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, named Ishmael, and so Abraham, being most helpful to the development of God's plan, said, *"Oh that Ishmael might live before you!"* (**Genesis 17:18, ESV**). In other words, "God, let me help you out. Let me give you Plan B, because it's obvious that your Plan A isn't going to work. There's no way Sarah is going to get pregnant, but fortunately for you, O, God, I have fathered another son who can fulfill this promise you've made to bring a blessing to all the nations of the world."

And this is where we head right back to verse 19, where *"God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him'"* (**Genesis 17:19, ESV**).

Laughter, generally speaking, is a good thing. Laughing at a joke, laughing with family as you're watching a hilarious comedy, laughing with friends as you're telling funny stories. But Laughing at someone is never a good idea, especially if that Someone is God. Not the wisest move.



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But when we jump ahead to the next chapter and see that Abraham wasn't alone. Genesis 18 begins with *"And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre"* (**Genesis 18:1, ESV**). And the text goes on to say that "three men" (much debate has been given about the LORD manifesting himself in the appearance of three men—a theophany of the trinity?) visited Abraham, and in verse 9 they asked, *"Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, 'She is in the tent.' The LORD said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?' The LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?'"* (**Genesis 18:9-13, ESV**).

Without being too hard on Abraham and Sarah, because, after all, we're all human, and, again, the limitations of our understanding of reality and the way God works, restrict our faith in the limitless God. But is it any wonder, based on how Abraham and Sarah both laughed at the news of her forthcoming pregnancy, that God named their child for them and gave him the name: **(Yitzhak): Isaac—the one who laughs.**

Isaac's name, however, didn't come from how Abraham and Sarah laughed around the fire at night telling funny stories about how the sheep got out of the pen the other night because Zedekiah, the shepherd fell asleep. Isaac's name didn't come because of a good, hardy, belly laugh from the soul. Isaac's name was given because of the uncomfortable laughter of doubt.

And that name given to the next generation—remember Matthew 1:2, Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob—was not because of a description of faithfulness but because of faithlessness in the God who is able. Did you happen to look ahead to the very next line in our text—the beginning of Gen. 18:14? *"Is anything too hard for the LORD?"* (**Genesis 18:14, ESV**).

3. WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS COME FROM YOUR FAITHLESSNESS?

The sad outcome of this story is that Isaac lived up to his name. His life story was one of consequences that come for laughing in disbelief in the face of God. His sons Jacob and Esau had a major blowup that led Jacob to run for his life and experience his own set of consequences filled with disappointment and pain, which cascading into the lives of his children and their children, and here we are about 3,800 years later, and we have Israel and Iran and Hezbollah and Hamas continuing the fight.

It appears, then, that Naming the next generation has significant consequences. And in that naming process, we have the rippling effects of the larger story that God continues to tell.



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So, what are we supposed to do with this, since we already have been given our names? Though we can go to a court of law and legally get them changed, but aside from that, your name is your name.

Application:

1- Whatever the origin is for your name, the backstory doesn't tell the whole story.

Every name that is written on a birth certificate only tells part of someone's story. It tells how someone came into the world, but it doesn't determine where they're going in the world. Your name tells how you got here but not where you're going.

God gave Isaac his name because of the doubts of his parents, but that only told part of his story. Sure, he lived out part of that story in the flesh of his own mistakes, his own doubts, his own struggles. But then included in all of that mess is the story of redemption. God continues His promise through Isaac, the son born out of the laughter of doubt. In Genesis 26, God said to Isaac, *"And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"* (**Genesis 26:4b, ESV**). At the very end of the story of Isaac, we read: *"Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him"* (**Genesis 35:28-29, ESV**).

Remember the two brothers who were at such odds that one was going to kill the other? And here they are now burying their father together. What do we learn?

2- Never count out the miracle of God rewriting the script of your life. However your life may have started out doesn't have to be the way you end up. Isaac may have started out through the seed of laughing at the impossible, but nothing is too hard for God, and Isaac finished his life with the impossible becoming possible.

3- We can name the next generation with hope, with promise, with possibility of what God can do. We can learn from Abraham's and Sarah's doubts resulting in God naming the next generation the way He did. We don't have to recycle that same story. We don't have to see the next generation—physically and spiritually—given names flowing out of our mistakes and mistrust. We can give names of blessing to those coming behind us They don't have to live their future based on our past mistakes.

This is not an issue of whether you have children or not. This is about us as a church family knowing that:

- Our past does not define our future.
- We can name the next generation with the hope, promise, and possibility of what God can do.

You are chosen by God. You have His name. You are a part of His family tree. You have a role here at E91. You are a part of God's mission. You are not alone. You are blessed. *"Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him"* (**Genesis 28:1, ESV**).



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4. HOW ARE YOU BLESSED IN BEING PART OF GOD'S FAMILY TREE AND HIS MISSION?

If you're part of the next generation, just know that we are calling you up; we're not calling you out! And for those of us who are in "the prime of our lives": Who are you blessing from the next generation? *"One generation shall commend your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts"* (**Psalm 145:4, ESV**).

NEXT STEPS:

- If you want to name the next generation by blessing them, text **"NEXT"** to 317-707-6462, and we'll follow up with you.
- If you're ready to learn more about what it means to take your next step with Jesus, text **"FOLLOW"** to the same number, and we'll reach out to you.

