

Read: Isaiah 62:1-5

What's in a name?

Isaiah 62:4

No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Do you know what your name means? Parents put some thought into naming their children. After all, your name is attached to you for life. It's an important job to give someone a name! Names in the Bible usually have special significance. Eve was named Eve "because she would become the mother of all the living" (Genesis 3:20); Abram's name was changed to Abraham because he would be "the father of many nations" (Genesis 17:4-5); Joseph was instructed to name Mary's son Jesus "because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Names mean something.

You probably know how much it can hurt your feelings when someone is mean to you and calls you a bad name or an unkind nickname. Those names sting, because they draw all the attention to some mistake we've made, something bad we've done, or even something we didn't have any control over.

The neighboring nations around Israel had some mean nicknames for them. Israel had stopped listening to the LORD. They had been pushed down by enemies and were going to face even more losing battles in the future. They were supposed to be God's chosen, special people, but it didn't look like they were. The neighbors called Israel "Deserted," because it seemed like the LORD had left them all alone. They called Israel "Desolate," because nothing good could possibly be there. But the LORD had other ideas and new names for his people. The new names sound kind of funny, but they have awesome meaning. The LORD declared that their new name would be Hephzibah, because "my delight is in her," and Beulah because they would be joined to the LORD like a bride to her groom. The LORD was going to send a Savior to bring his people back to him.

Because of our sins, we deserved to be deserted and left alone by God forever. But God has given us a new name. It's his name. In the water and promise of your Baptism, the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—put his name on you. You are God's own. Jesus has claimed you and joined you to himself like a bride to her groom. But he doesn't stop there. He gives you another name: Hephzibah, because he delights in you! Not because you've earned it, but because God has taken away your sins in Christ and has made you beautiful, delightful, and joined to him forever.

Find out what your name means, and maybe you'll learn something. Rejoice that God has named you as his own, and as he names you, so you are!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Ask your parents to tell you why they named you what they did.
- What does the name "Jesus" mean?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why did the nations around Israel call them "Deserted" and "Desolate"?
- Who put his name on you when you were baptized?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- What do the names "Beulah" and "Hephzibah" mean?
- What comfort is there in knowing that, in Christ, the LORD's delight is in you?

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, what undeserved love you show us! Even though we deserve nothing from you because of our sin, in Christ you give us everything. Help us always to rejoice that you have placed your name on us in Baptism, and give us comfort to know that you delight in us. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.