

Sometimes, people change their names. Let me give you some birth names, and see if you can figure out the names by which these people were known later in life.

- Dino Crocetti --- Dean Martin
 - Joseph Levitch --- Jerry Lewis
 - Marion Michael Morrison --- John Wayne
 - Dianne Belmont --- Lucille Ball
 - Eileen Regina Edwards --- Shania Twain
 - Jennifer Anastassakis --- Jennifer Aniston
 - Eldrick Woods --- Tiger Woods
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Names... God does not change names, but God is known by a variety of names. Some scholars have counted that God is known by 63 names in the OT. As we learned on Ash Wednesday:

- These names identify God. In the midst of all the things of life that put in a claim for your time and talent and treasure, we remember that there is only one who has ultimate claim on our lives. We learn God's identity through these names.
 - These names reveal God's characteristics. For example: The God who Heals, and the God who Shepherds. These are the very nature of our God; his character. God's names reveal these characteristics.
 - These names were given to people in great need. These are not made up names like John Wayne and Shania Twain, to serve their purposes. These names for God show how God relates to us.
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During the Sundays and Wednesdays of Lent we are going to be looking at the names by which our God has been known throughout the generations.

We begin today by looking at the very first name given to God in the Bible. The name in Hebrew is Elohim, and we can define this name as meaning for us: Creator.

10 fingers: 10 words. These words: *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* Right from the very beginning we are asked to accept or reject the idea of a Creator.

Three things we have to know about this Creator God who made the heavens and the earth.

- **First, we have to know that Elohim is the God above all gods.**

The word *Elohim* in Hebrews literally means “gods.” It is used as a “plural of emphasis.” In Genesis 1 it means this: In the beginning the most incredible Being of all beings made the heavens and made the earth – *Elohim*.

That is the first thing you have to know about this Creator God: that he is God above all gods.

- **And then we need to know that Elohim made everything from scratch.**

God made it all by saying a word, and it came to be. Into my cell phone I can say the word: “Church.” My phone obeys my command and calls Jennifer in the Church Office. I can then bug her for a while! It is incredible! I have voice command! But not true voice command to create.

It is not my marvelous voice that really makes it happen. There are so many electronic commands going through that phone which makes it happen. I cannot make it happen from scratch. But the Bible calls us to believe that God has true “voice command.”

In the same way, have any of you truly made a cake from scratch? Put your hands down because nobody has ever truly made a cake from scratch. We are given the ingredients: the eggs, the flour, the sugar white and the sugar brown.

But there is not a single thing we can say we have made from scratch. Because we do not have “voice command” the way *Elohim* does. “God spoke, and it was light.” Everything is given to us by a Creator.

- **And, third, we need to know that Elohim chose to make things good!**

What if God had made a different world? What if a different god had made this world? Then we might have had to duck raindrops because they were as hard as bricks! Or maybe we would have to plant all new forests every year because the life expectancy of a tree was the life expectancy of a cat! It could be very different!

We don't think much about things that are good. We tend to take good things for granted. But today we remember that the Creation is so precise – so precise – that incredibly small changes would mean that we would have no water or we would have no summer – there would be no life.

So, the key words for today: The God above all gods made from scratch a good creation.

That leads us to ask a very significant question on this Sunday morning. The question is: Do I believe the first 10 words of the Bible? Do I believe that: *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”*?

If you have never asked yourself that question before, ask it this morning. It is a life changing question? Are those first 10 words in my Bible true?

If the 10 Words are true then:

- **God is smart enough.**

In Hebrews we read these words: *“Every house has a builder, but the one who built everything is God.”* [Hebrews 3:4] And in Isaiah we read: *“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.”* [Isaiah 40:28]

If we believe that the tilt of the earth is set by the Creator so that we have seasons, and that the moon is no closer than it is so that the tides do not sweep over all the land, and that the oxygen level in the atmosphere is not a few percent greater so

that when a match the whole earth does not explode in flame... If God is smart enough to do all of that...

Well, then maybe that problem you have had all week you could bring to Jesus this week? Maybe that question you have about your friendships could be safely brought to God in prayer? Maybe that uncomfortable feeling you have about work could be mentioned in the presence of God.

If you believe the first 10 words of the Bible, then you also believe that God is smart enough to help you with whatever is bothering you this week.

One degree. A ship that changes direction by one degree will eventually change its course by hundreds of miles. Maybe today God is calling you to change your life by one degree.

- Maybe God is calling you this week to trust him more by giving a dollar more in offering each week, or \$10 more. One degree...
- Maybe God is calling you to trust him more this week by giving one hour more of time to him each week – an hour to read the Bible or an hour to walk and pray or an hour to volunteer in a ministry. One degree...
- Maybe God is calling you this week to trust him more by asking him for input in a decision you need to make this week. To buy the house/car/boat, or not. It is a scary thing to pray to God and ask for guidance. But maybe in one area of life this week we can ask God for guidance. One degree...

God is smart enough to be in on our decisions. An example: If you drive down the Twin Cities and take 694, you will go by a huge office complex. The office complex is home to Medtronic, Inc. The former CEO of Medtronic, the one who helped it become an amazing company, is Bill George.

One night in 1988 Bill George had to make a major decision. As he was driving around Lake of the Isles in Minneapolis he realized that his life had been

compartmentalized into work, home, spiritual life, and community – and it was not working. He realized that night: “Here is this wonderful life I have been blessed with, and I am wandering in the desert.”

Bill opened his life that night to God’s guidance. He committed himself to what God knew he should be committed to in the correct order – marriage, family, friends, community, work: with God being in all of the areas of his life.ⁱ

We have a Creator God. And if God is smart enough to create this world, God is also smart enough to be invited into our decisions and to have a hand in guiding our lives.

If we accept those first 10 words of our Bible’s as true, God is smart enough. And...

- **God is strong enough.**

The Bible says that God is the potter and we are the clay. The strength in that relationship is the hands of the potter.

This week let God be the potter of your life. What will God shape in your life this week.

- Have you had an attitude lately? Can anything be done about that? If God can create majestic stars and tiny gems, then what can God do with your bad attitude? God is strong and a potter. What if we invited God to change our attitudes by one degree this week?
- What will God shape in you this week? Have you been itching to use your gifts and talents in a new way, but have been afraid to take the risk?

Look at what happens when God’s creative power is unleashed in a life. Look at Abraham – God gave him a new place. Look at Moses – God gave him a new career. Look at Martha and Mary – God gave them new lives. Look at Martin Luther – God gave him freedom and peace. God is the Creator: the potter.

What if we opened our lives this week to God and asked God to change our lives by one degree...

Remember this from years ago: GINFWMY. How many of you know what it stands for? Do you believe in the 10 Words which begin the Bible and do you believe that GINFWMY? He is *Elohim!*

ⁱ God Is My CEO, by Larry Julian, pages 6-7.