IMPORTANT STUFF ABOUT GOD (no. 1)

His name isn't "God"

(preface)

Throughout the Old Testament, God is called *Lord* in some places and *LORD* in others. See the difference? Sometimes it's -*ord* (lower case) and sometimes it's -*ORD* (all caps). The differences aren't typos. They're intentional, meant to identify two distinct words.

When just the first letter is capitalized, **Lord** is a title of honor and respect for God (similar to how we might use *Doctor* or *Professor,* e.g. "Excuse me, Professor, can you please repeat that?")

LORD with all caps is a modern English rendering of the ancient Hebrew word יהוה, which is God's personal name, Yahweh (pronounced *yah' way)*. It's sometimes written as *Jehovah*, depending on which Bible translation you have. You can find more tidbits about Biblical Hebrew in the **et cetera** below.

In ancient cultures, personal names were thought to be powerful. You see this same idea in some modern fantasy and sci-fi stories where characters might hide their true name from some people, but share it with others. It's a fairly big deal that the one true God, creator of all that exists, willingly revealed his name to humanity rather than hide it.

Back then, each culture worshipped a unique local god. The Bible mentions Marduk, Asherah, Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Dagon, and more. A main theme in the Old Testament is that those other "gods" are not really gods at all. There is just one God. He is Yahweh. Only Yahweh is true. Only Yahweh is Almighty. Only Yahweh is Creator. And only Yahweh is Love.

WARM-UP

- Talk about the importance and power of being known by name.
- Talk about a time you forgot someone's name, or someone forgot your name.
- Talk about nicknames — both the good and bad.
- Talk about the different names we use for God and how they shape our views of him.

WATCH

"Yahweh" [3:59]

READ

Genesis 1:1-2 and Genesis 2:4-7
Psalm 8

Read out loud from several versions. Read as written. Then read substituting *Yahweh* for *LORD.*

RESPOND

Talk about the distinction between *God* in Genesis 1 and *Yahweh* in Genesis 2. Does it affect how you hear and understand the story? If so, why and how?

How does knowing that God has a personal name, and knowing what that name is, shape or impact your understanding and view of him? Why?

ENGAGE

Copy out Psalm 8:1 and Psalm 9:1-2 (or other Psalm passages that are about *LORD.* When the Bible says *LORD* (or *the LORD*), substitute *Yahweh*, like this:

> O Yahweh, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! (Psalm 8:1)
> [*LORD*]

> But they delight in the law of Yahweh, meditating on it day and night. (Psalm 1:2)
> [*the LORD*]

ERGO

As you pray to close (and throughout the week), focus on how you address God, who is both supernatural and personal, both almighty and gentle. Consider what it means that he has given us his true name, and yet invites us to call him something even more personal than that: ***our Father.***

(postscript)

> Hebrew is written from left to right. So יהוה would be spelled out loud like this: י (yod) ה (hey) ו (vav) ה (hey).

> Jews considered God's name יהוה too sacred to speak aloud. So they used the word *Adonai* instead.

> Biblical Hebrew originally had no written vowels (but obviously they had spoken vowels — it's impossible to talk without vowel sounds. Go ahead. Try it.). If you look at a Hebrew Bible, you'll see little dots and dashes, usually below the letters. Those represent vowel sounds and were added in the Middle Ages.