

When I see a new bird in my backyard I rush to get my phone so I can run the “Merlin Bird ID” app. I want to see what it is...what it’s really called. When I was a little girl collecting shells on the beach in California where I grew up, I always took them home and got out my complete book of shells to see what I had found...what it’s real name is. I was never content to call something a swirly black and white thing, or a spiky pink mouthed shell. I wanted to know the real name.

We humans want to identify, classify, catalog and pin down the things that surround us in life.

And because we know there is a power greater than ourselves, and that that ultimate reality is a real presence and real presence in our lives, we have the desire to classify and codify that too. The authors of the Torah tell us that YHWH should not be named. God only says to Moses “I am who I am.” So, they used stand in names for God - Yahweh, Lord, King of kings.

We experience God as Father, creator; Son, savior and redeemer and Spirit, guide and sustainer.

We create symbols such as IHS, the dove, Alpha and Omega.

William Countryman, in his book, *Living on the Border of the Holy* says that he consciously uses many names for the Triune God throughout his text. In this way we don’t focus solely on God the Father or get too attached to one name with which we may have had negative experience in the past.

Close your eyes for a minute and listen to some of the names that Countryman uses for God:

Hidden

Truth

Holy

Love

Reality

Meaning

Divine

Direction

Wholeness

Home

Rather than depending on needing to know the exact right name for God who is greater than we can ask or imagine, let’s let our Holy One guide us through many names into truth, understanding and compassion.