

## Every Name Matters

### I. Announce:

A. Welcome to those watching online.

B. Slide 1-5 Starting Point (MM&VV). CK Volunteers. At Risk (Tyler/Irene, Camp Alandale share amazing program for foster kids/Riv.Co.). Widows Fellowship. EVPRC.

C. Slide 6 Prayer:

### II. Slide 6b Intro: Every Name Matters

A. Point to my name tag. Pretty simple, it's just a name. But a name is never just a name. A name carries: identity. a story. belonging.

1. Replace name tag with "Unknown". Imagine your name being replaced with this: *Not known. Not seen. Not remembered.* That is how a lot of people feel... *even in church.*

a) 2018 I met Fran in Bangkok, to fly to Sittwe. On plane rt b4 we landed, "*oh by the way, it's illegal to speak their name.*" "Rohingya" was outlawed!

(1) In reality, the danger is not just saying *the name Rohingya*, but what it represents (recognizing a people the state has tried to erase).

b) **Passport Illustration:** (I did w/Nepal gov officials)

(1) What this *Blue Passport* means. *Where I'm from. Who I am.* [It's an official document issued by a gov, certifying the holder's identity and citizenship and entitling them to travel under its protection to and from foreign countries]

(2) The Roh lived in Myanmar for over 500 years (1430 ad). Then were stripped of their schooling/degrees, denied their existing citizenship, *denied to ever speak their name ... Rohingya!*

(a) *First They Erased Our Name* (book/audiobook).

(3) The 1st step was not physical destruction, but **the removal of names, identity, and dignity**. Once people are no longer seen as individuals, it becomes easier to treat them as *expendable*.

(a) In some of the darkest moments in history, the first step in destroying a people is erasing their name. In Ezra 2, the first step in rebuilding a people is restoring their name.

2. Put name tag back on “Brian”. **Ezra 2 tonight God chose to record names most of us can’t even pronounce.**

a) It reminds us - God **does not see Unknown**. He sees **Names!**

b) You may feel like **a Number** in life, but you are **a Name** to God.

(1) It’s what **Bono** was pointing out in 1 of his songs. *46664, was Nelson Mandela’s prison number on Robben Island*. Mandela was reduced to a #.

B. Where **Ezra ch.1** was God stirring hearts, **Ezra 2** shows **who** those hearts belong to.

1. It grounds the story in **real people**.

C. **Theme:** God values *people*, not just *projects*. [you’re not a number in God’s work].

### III. Slide7a **WALKING THROUGH THE CHAPTER**

A. Ezra 2 can feel like a *long list of names and numbers*. It’s easy to skim. **But God** chose to record this. That means it matters. [this is *not filler*. this is *intentional*].

B. **A People, Not Just a Project** (1-35) \**Read vs.1,2*

C. We have a handful of **Leaders** (2). **Families** are listed by name (3-19). **Towns** and groups are identified (20-35). [real people, real history]

1. This is not just about **rebuilding a temple**. It is about **who** is coming back to worship.

D. What does it say about **God** that He includes names we might overlook?

E. **Slide7b Everyone Has a Role** (36-58)

F. Priests. Levites. Singers. Gatekeepers. Temple servants. [different roles, same mission]

1. **Notice:** Not everyone rebuilds walls. Some lead worship. Some guard doors. Some serve behind the scenes.

G. Do you ever feel like your role is **less important** than someone else's?

H. Where has **God** placed you right now to contribute?

I. **Slide7c Some Uncertainty, Still Included** (59-63)

J. Some could **not** prove their genealogy. **They were limited in certain roles.**

1. Not everyone had it all figured out.

K. Have you ever felt unsure about **where you fit in** *spiritually* or in *ministry*?

L. **Slide7d Collective Impact** (64-70) \***Read vs.64-70**

M. 49,897 return. They **give** according to *their ability*. They **settle and begin again.**

1. Individual names, collective mission!

N. What could **God** do if every person simply **gave** what they could? (Missions, feed the world)

O. **God is not just rebuilding a place.** He is **gathering a people.**

**IV. Slide8a CHAPTER THEME** God values **people**, not just projects.

A. **1. God Sees Individuals, not just Crowds**

1. Examples of **Jesus'** one-on-one's? (Nic. social outcast/Women@well. vertically challenged IRS agent/Zacchaeus. "Mary". Nathaniel). **How about a lady he met in the crowd and called her out?**

B. **Every name** recorded is **a life**: a story. a family. a journey back.

1. **What feels like a list to us, is personal to God.**

2. News Highlights this morning: "250 missing after boat sinks."

a) "*Statistics are human beings with the tears wiped away.*" [To us, they're *statistics*. To God, they're *names*].

C. Chuck Swindoll pointed out that one of the simplest ways to show **value** to a person is to **remember their name**. Because a name says, *I see you. You matter. You're not just part of a crowd.*

1. **And** what **we** try to do *imperfectly*... **God** does **perfectly**.

a) *I have called you by name, you are Mine.* (Isaiah 43:1) OT - Israel

b) *The sheep hear his voice, and He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.* (John 10)

D. **Names** mean you're **Remembered**. Some of these people had been in exile for decades. **But God** didn't forget them. *Empires forgot them. History overlooked them. But God wrote their names down.*

1. If **remembering a name** communicates **value**... imagine what it means that **God** never forgets yours.

E. **Slide8b 2. God Values Faithfulness over Prominence**

F. Most of these names are unknown to us. *No titles. No spotlight. No recognition.* **Yet God** writes them down.

1. In God's kingdom, **obscurity** does not equal **insignificance**.

2. You do not have to be **known by people**, to be **known by God**.

G. **Slide8c 3. God Builds Through Ordinary People**

H. **No celebrities here.** Just: *families. workers. servants.*

1. The work of **God** moves forward through **everyday obedience**.

2. **Extraordinary things happen** when **ordinary people** say **yes** to God.

I. **Slide8d 4. God Invites Everyone Into His Work**

J. **Different roles, same purpose.** You may not do *everything*, **but** you are called to do **something!**

1. The question is not **if you have a part**, **but if you will play it**.

## K. Slide 8e 5. God Measures Differently Than We Do

L. We measure: platform. visibility. influence.

M. God measures: faithfulness. obedience. willingness.

1. What matters to God often looks *small* to us. (5 loaves & 2 fish, *what are these?*)
2. In God's work, **every name** matters, **every role** matters, **every act of faithfulness** matters.

N. Do you believe your life and **contribution** truly matter to God?

O. Where might you be *underestimating* the significance of **your obedience**?

## V. Slide 9a CHRIST CONNECTION

### A. 1. Jesus Knows Your Name

B. This chapter is a list of names. *Jesus takes it further. He knows you personally.*

C. Think of passages where Jesus: Calls people by name (?). Sees individuals in crowds (?). [you are not just part of *a group*. You are **known** by Christ]

### D. Slide 9b 2. Jesus Builds a People, Not Just a Place

E. Book of Ezra is about *rebuilding the temple*.

F. **Jesus shifts it**: We become *the temple*. The church becomes *His people*.

1. The focus moves from structure to relationship.

### G. Slide 9c 3 Jesus Uses Ordinary People

H. Fishermen, tax collectors, everyday people. The **pattern in Ezra** continues in the Gospels. [**God** has always built *His work* through unlikely people].

### I. Slide 9d 4. Jesus Secures Your Place

J. In Ezra 2, some could not prove their place.

K. **In Christ**: Your **identity** is secure. Your **place** is established. [not by **lineage**, but by **grace**]

1. In **Jesus**, you do not have to prove you belong. **You are invited in!!!**

L. **Slide 9e 5. Jesus Is the Ultimate Restorer of Identity**

M. **Exile** *stripped* identity. **Return** *restored* it.

N. **Jesus goes deeper:** restores **identity**. restores **belonging**. restores **relationship w/God**.

O. **Do you see yourself as known by Jesus or just *part of the crowd*?**

P. **Are you trying to prove your place, or are you resting in what **Christ** has done?**

Q. **Challenge:** Learn someone's name this week. Use it intentionally. See people, not just crowds.

R. **You are not lost in the list - you are written into God's story.**

S. **Keywords:** Name. Individuals. Ordinary.