

Introduction:

1. An old preacher named Marshall Keeble told a simple story about going to the grocery store. He said, "You went in the store and wanted a can of corn. You picked up a can that said 'beans.' You knew it said 'beans.' You read it. Everybody could read it. You went through the checkout lane with a can of beans. Now, don't complain when you get home and don't have corn."
 - a. Brother Keeble used this illustration to talk about people who said they wanted what God offers, but they willingly chose something else. And when it came time to check out and face God in the judgment, these people have no right to complain. They chose what they chose.
 - b. His lesson: "When you do your pickin' in religion, be sure you get what you said you wanted."
2. I want to expand his illustration to talk about the value of names. A name is a designation by which a thing is called. A name is a label that is used to distinguish one thing from another.
 - a. The can of corn says "corn" because that's what's inside; likewise for the can of beans. The labels on canned goods mean something. Who would argue that they have no meaning?
 - b. Nearly 40 years ago the practice in our family was to buy dented canned goods and some with no labels. When we bought those with no labels we didn't know what we were getting. Sometimes we got surprises—both good and bad! Names and labels identify the contents.

The Lesson:**I. Names have meaning in our culture.**

- A. Whenever anyone says names have no meaning, I ask them about their children.
 1. Have you given your children Bible names—like David, Jeremy, Adam, Rebecca, Sarah or Mary? Those are honorable names; we want our children to have good names.
 2. Would you name your daughter Jezebel, or your son Judas? While those are Bible names, they have a connotation that we don't want attached to our kids.
 3. A recent news story featured a family where the little son had been named Adolph Hitler. It was shocking that parents would be so foolish. Names mean something.
- B. Whenever anyone says names mean nothing, I ask about their marriage.
 1. My wife's name identifies her with me. When we were married she took on my name because we have a relationship as husband and wife—we are a couple! Her name is no longer Parker, but Dawson. She is Mrs. Max Dawson.
 2. I emphasize the "she is" part. Another woman is not my wife. My wife's name identifies her with me and me with her. And that name sets her apart from other women.
- C. Whenever anyone says names mean nothing, I ask about their checkbook.
 1. Our checkbook says "Max or Lee Dawson." Those are our checks, and when we write a check the bank expects to see one of our names on that check.
 2. Will just any name do? Is just any signature acceptable? Names mean something.
- D. Whenever anyone says names mean nothing, I ask them about the title to their car.
 1. Will just any name do on that title? Or is it your name that is important on the title?
 2. Why is your name important? Because it signifies ownership of the vehicle. It belongs to you. Why shouldn't it have your name on it? You bought it, and paid for it. If you think the name on the title means nothing, then sign it over to another person. (Just the title if you please, not the note at the bank!) Names mean something.
- E. Whenever anyone says names mean nothing, I ask them about derogatory names.
 1. What is the worst thing you could imagine someone calling you?
 2. Would you want your children to go to school and be called by those names?
 3. Momma taught us, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Not true, Mom. When people use ugly words to call names, kids are hurt by it.
- F. More could be given; but you get it. (Does it matter that your team is called Dallas Cowboys?)

II. Names have meaning in the Old Testament.

- A. Beginning with the first family, every name had meaning and significance.
 1. Adam means "man" or "of the earth" for he was taken from the ground, Genesis 2:7.
 2. Eve means "life." She gave life to the entire human race, Genesis 3:20.
 3. The first child born was Cain. His name means "obtained" or "acquired," Genesis 4:1.

4. Abel is “emptiness, nothing” (Eve was left with nothing at his murder), Genesis 4:2.
 5. Seth means “appointed.” He was appointed by God to replace Abel, Genesis 4:25.
- B. Names had meaning among God’s people, Israel.
1. The father of Israel was Abram/Abraham, Genesis 17:5-7. “Father of many nations.”
 2. Sarah’s name was changed from Sarai, Genesis 17:15-16. Sarah is “Princess.”
 3. Isaac is “laughter” (Sarah laughed at the prospect of a son), Genesis 21:3; 18:13.
 4. Jacob means “deceiver;” his name was changed to Israel, Genesis 32:28. Israel means “prince of God,” a much more fitting name for the people of God.
 5. Many more examples could be cited, but you get the idea. Names have meaning.
- C. It is important to note that God was instrumental in naming most of these people. Names and their meanings were important to God. So much so, that God said that His people were not to use *His name* in a careless way, Exodus 20:7.

III. Names have meaning in the New Testament.

- A. Lest anyone think this is just an Old Testament issue, the gospel also teaches about names. It teaches us about the name of Jesus.
1. It was important to God that He be called Jesus, Matthew 1:21. Jesus means “savior.”
 2. His name would be called “Immanuel—God with us,” Matthew 1:22-23.
 3. There are many names (terms and designations) used to describe Jesus. Note what the prophet Isaiah says about His name, Isaiah 9:6.
 - a. He is called “Wonderful” because everything about Him is special and a wonder.
 - b. He is called “Counselor” because He knows the mind of God and reveals it unto man.
 - c. He is called “Mighty God” because that is what He is—God in the flesh.
 - d. “Everlasting Father” indicates that He is Father of the everlasting age, of eternity. Father is used in the sense of “originator” (like Washington, the *father* of our country).
 - e. “Prince of Peace;” the Prince from heaven bringing peace between God and man.
 4. These (and many more) names are given to Jesus in the Bible. Don’t ever think names mean nothing. They stand for the person and all that He is, Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:9-11.
- B. But there is more, James 2:7. God’s people are called by His noble, worthy, honorable, and excellent name. The name Christian identifies us with Christ, Acts 11:26. In fact, nearly all the terms used to describe God’s people identify us with the Lord.
1. Individually, we are called Christians, 1 Peter 4:16. “...in this name” (NASB). There are numerous other terms that identify us with Christ: disciples, followers, brethren, etc.
 2. Collectively, we are called “the body of Christ,” 1 Corinthians 12:27. “Body” is a collective noun that groups us together as one. He is talking about the church, Ephesians 1:22-23. The church is the body of Christ. Several terms are used by God to describe the church.
 - a. It is called “church of God,” 1 Corinthians 1:2. This term identifies it with God.
 - b. It is called “kingdom of Jesus Christ,” Revelation 1:9. This identifies it with its King.
 - c. When Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, he sent greetings from “the churches of Christ” in the area where he was, Romans 16:16. “Church of Christ” identifies a body of people who have been called out from the world by Jesus Christ.
 - d. Paul spoke of the church as the “house of God,” 1 Timothy 3:15. This identifies the church as God’s family. All of God’s children are in His family.
 - e. The church is also known as “the bride, the Lamb’s wife,” Revelation 21:9. This identifies the church as belonging to Christ, emphasizing its purity, Ephesians 5:25-27.
- C. Names have meaning, don’t they? While the church has no single proper name by which it is called, each of these scriptural designations tell us something important about what the church is. These are more than just words. These terms describe what the church is!

Conclusion:

1. It is important that men see that names were used to identify the Lord’s people.
2. Someone says “Names don’t matter; doctrine is what is important.” The fact is, the name of Jesus, and names for His people are all part of the doctrine of Christ! Name and doctrine are joined, Acts 5:28. We wouldn’t know what name to call ourselves except that it is found in the doctrine of Christ.
3. Remember the illustration from Marshall Keeble. “When you do your pickin’ in religion, be sure you get what you said you wanted.” Do you want to be a part of God’s family? Choose carefully. Make sure you identify God’s people when you choose. This lesson should help you.