



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

It's Personal / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

**It's personal because
Jesus knows your name.**

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that Jesus knows them personally, and because of Him, they should get to know others personally—beginning with their names.

SCRIPTURE

"Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Luke 12:7a NIV).

When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today." Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy (Luke 19:5-6 NLT).

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- **Relationships shouldn't be fake.**
- When it comes to our relationships, with our friends or the people we spend a lot of time with—we want real ones...not fake ones, right?

TENSION

- When people know our names, it makes us feel like there's a connection between us and the person who knows our name.
- When it comes to people, the opposite of real is PERSONAL.
- Some of you may have grown up hearing that God knows your name.
- *"Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Luke 12:7a NIV).*
- While we all might think it's a little strange to know how many hairs are on our heads, some of us struggle with the idea of God really knowing us.

TRUTH

- Fakeness is literally the opposite of how Jesus lived.
- Zacchaeus was a tax collector.

- Zacchaeus was a Jewish guy working for the Roman Empire, an entire nation that basically bullied the Jewish people.
- On top of that, tax collectors would always collect more than what was actually owed, and they pocketed the rest.
- At this point in Jesus' life, He had gone from being a casual carpenter's son to being a big deal. He was known for all these miracles He'd performed and powerful messages He'd given.
- *When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today." Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy (Luke 19:5-6 NLT).*
- Out of this giant crowd following Jesus to Jerusalem, and the giant crowd of people in Jericho just trying to get a peek of Jesus as He passes through; Jesus stops and chats with Zacchaeus...maybe the most hated man in the whole town.
- We care because this is a story about Jesus and how He treats people.
- Jesus made sure to know and use his name. And by the way, He does the same for you.

APPLICATION

- The best thing for some of us to do this week is to find a way to see for ourselves what Jesus is like.
- Zacchaeus probably had no intention of totally changing his life when he first got up that tree. But he was just taking the first step toward seeing Jesus for himself.
- **It's personal because Jesus knows your name.**
- Jesus changed the way everybody thought about God.
- Jesus knows your name, He knows you, and He cares about you. But if that's true for you, that's also true for the person next to you, and your siblings, and your parents, and that kid at school you avoid, or that teacher you can't stand.
- **The people around you may not know God cares about them personally until YOU care about them personally.**
 1. **Learn their names.**
 2. **Learn the right way to pronounce their names.**
 3. **Use their names when you see them.**
- Knowing someone's name is the absolute simplest thing we can do to communicate that someone matters.

LANDING

- We have a personal God.
- One of the greatest ways that we can point people to this kind of personal God is by modeling what it looks like to be personal with others.
- Jesus always made it personal with the people around Him. And you can too...by simply knowing their names.

INTERACTIVE

This Interactive happens in the Tension section. See that section for more details.

For this Interactive you will need:

- *A picture of the following: The Sombrero Galaxy, Butterfly Nebula, and the Pillars of Creation.*



TEACHING SCRIPT

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INTRODUCTION

2.5 MINUTES

Let's start with an awkward moment, shall we?

When I was a freshman in high school, I was a trombone player in the marching band. For the entire fall, I hung out with the other guys in my section at practice. Most of them were older, but for me, that was kind of cool—okay, it was really cool. And our trip that we took during fall break was something I had been dreaming about basically since middle school. Every year, our band travelled to a nearby state for a competition, and we got to hang out with other people who actually liked talking about stuff like playing the trombone.

On the first night of the competition, we were at the stadium and I was hanging out with some guys near the snack stand and this girl from another school in our district was talking to us. Okay, to be fair, she was talking to my buddy, Jason. He was like the lead-guy—way older and way cooler than me. And being the type of stand-up guy he was, Jason turned to introduce her to everyone in the group. He said, "Hey, this is Darius. This is Kyle. This is Holden. And this guy...." He got to me. He paused with an awkward look on his face and said, "I'm sorry, man. What's your name again?"

Ouch. I know. It was definitely the perfect time to play the sad-trombone noise.

Of course, it was my turn to respond so—I tried to be cool. But in that five seconds, it became clear to me that we weren't as good of friends as I thought we were. I mean, I didn't talk much in the group, but I hung out with those guys all the time; I was literally in his section, we had sat on the bus to the competition for hours—and he didn't even know my name.

Have you ever been there? Like where you thought you were tight with somebody and you figured out your friendship or your relationship wasn't as deep as you thought it was? It's not a great feeling because deep down, I think we all live with this expectation:

Relationships shouldn't be fake. They shouldn't be shallow, and they shouldn't make you feel like you could spend a huge amount of time with someone and then be easily forgotten.

Regardless of whether or not you're a really social person, I think we'd all agree that, when it comes to our relationships, with our friends or the people we spend a lot of time with—we want real ones...not fake ones, right? I don't want fake friends...friends who feel like they have to

pretend around me, who don't care as much as they act like they do, or who don't even really know me. Whether it's the people you hang out with from the band, your teammates, the people you have a group chat with; we all want more than that.

In a word, **we want our relationships to be personal.**

TENSION

5 MINUTES

There's a cheat code, by the way, or shortcut to figuring out if a relationship is personal. It's easy. You know how I know if somebody is NOT personal with me? They call me some generic nickname, like "buddy" or "chief" or they say "YO guy!". You've probably experienced this kind of fakeness—somebody acts like they care about you, acts like they're your friend and they keep referring to you as "guy" or "fam" or something other than your actual name; the one you've literally lived with for years, because...

You guessed it. It's just like my "friends" from band practice.

They don't even know your name! And people knowing our names matters, right? It makes us feel important...known. It makes us feel like there's a connection between us and the person who knows our name.

Nobody wants a fake friend or a fake relationship. But you know what the opposite of fake is? REAL, right? I totally agree when it comes to sunglasses, art, and anything else I buy from Wish.com; the opposite of fake is real, but when it comes to relationships, I think there's a better word. Actually, I KNOW there's a better word. When it comes to people, the opposite of real is PERSONAL.

Think about it; somebody can be real without knowing you personally. They can be cool without being close to you. They can even know something about you, like what math class you're in, or they may even notice something like what brands you wear, but that doesn't make it personal. Being personal puts somebody in a whole different category. And that's what this series is about.

If I asked you to name everyone you can think of who knows your name, how many do you think would be on that list? And I also wonder, if you did make that list, would you put God on it?

Here's the thing: some of you may have grown up hearing that God knows your name. There are a bunch of examples in the Bible about how God knows us that closely, like when Jesus says this:

"Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Luke 12:7a NIV).

Seriously, that is getting pretty personal.

While we all might think it's a little strange to know how many hairs are on our heads, some of us struggle with the idea of God really knowing us. Maybe you feel like "does God really know me or is He more like that football coach that just says, "Hey buddy!" for four straight years". But there can be a lot of reasons why you feel that way about God...

- You might feel like He doesn't seem personal because you can't see God and you can't hear Him talk back when you do try to pray.
- Or maybe you don't really know much about God...or even care much about God...so it feels strange to think that He'd know your name and care about you.
- Maybe you've met Christians who don't seem to care about getting to know you...so why would God?

- Maybe you think He doesn't seem personal because, if He's real, if He's just so big, if He created everything, what makes us so important that He would know us personally and individually? I mean, let's pretend that we all believe in a God who created everything. Are we to believe that a God that created this knows my name?



This is the **Sombrero Galaxy**. Not kidding, that's its name. The Sombrero Galaxy is a lenticular galaxy in the constellation, Virgo found 31,100,000 light years from Earth.

The God that created this knows my name?

And the God that created a **Butterfly Nebula** knows my name? It's a planetary nebula in the constellation, Scorpius. It's the most complex ever observed in planetary nebulae. The central star is one of the hottest stars known, with a surface temperature in excess of 450k degrees.

Am I expected to believe that the God that created that knows me personally?

This last one is called the **Pillars of Creation**. It's made of interstellar gas and dust in the Eagle Nebula, specifically the Serpens constellation, some 6,500–7,000 light years from Earth. The gas and dust are in the process of creating new stars, while also being eroded by the light from nearby stars that have recently formed.

We're to believe that a God so big and powerful that He could create something like this has taken the time and the energy to know my middle name is Buford? Why would He even care?!

TRUTH

8 MINUTES

While I think these are actually some real and understandable reasons, I believe that He does. I believe that He cares for me and for you. I believe that He knows not just my name, but He knows yours as well, and that He has our back.

And here's why I think that: fakeness is literally the opposite of how Jesus lived. He got personal with basically everyone He met. He knew their names and their stories. One of those people who Jesus interacted with that helps me believe that God is a personal God who knows our names is a guy named Zacchaeus.

Now, we'll be talking about Zacchaeus for the next few weeks so to give us a head start, Zacchaeus was a tax collector, which might not seem like a huge deal in our culture, but back then, tax collectors were basically considered scammers and traitors. First off, Zacchaeus was a Jewish guy working for the Roman Empire, an entire nation that basically bullied the Jewish people. That's bad enough, but tax collectors weren't exactly stand-up dudes. They'd always collect more than what was actually owed and they pocketed the rest. A tax collector was kind of like the guy that steals the money you're collecting for a school fundraiser so he can buy more energy drinks.

And this guy was a chief tax collector. Not good. The worst of the worst.

So, at this point in Jesus' life, He had gone from being a casual carpenter's son to being a big deal. He was known for all these miracles He'd performed and powerful messages He'd given. By this point, basically everywhere He went, crowds would gather to try and get a glimpse of this Rabbi Jesus who was healing people.

That's what happened when He was passing through the town of Jericho on His way to Jerusalem and met this guy named Zacchaeus. Here's how the interaction is recorded by Luke, a guy who interviewed real people who witnessed Jesus' life and ministry:

When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today." Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy (Luke 19:5-6 NLT).

Let's break this down a little bit. Out of this giant crowd following Jesus to Jerusalem, and the giant crowd of people in Jericho just trying to get a peek of Jesus as He passes through; Jesus stops and chats with Zacchaeus...maybe the most hated man in the whole town.

This is such a huge deal. Getting this kind of attention from Jesus is crazier than if your favorite celebrity randomly started following you on Instagram and commenting on all of your pictures.

Not only did Jesus call out the guy who was watching from the tree, but did you notice that Jesus calls him by his name!? He didn't say, "Hey, Big Guy!" or "Hey, You!". He called Zacchaeus by name.

Then, not only does Jesus call him by name, but Jesus invites Himself over to Zacchaeus' house. Everyone else knows how much of an honor this is and look how they respond.

But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled (Luke 19:7 NLT).

Okay, maybe you wouldn't use the word "grumbled", but basically, they were being haters. This was a guy they didn't like—maybe nobody liked. Nobody would have wanted to be seen hanging out with him and yet Jesus goes straight toward him.

But real talk: Why do we care? Because this isn't just a story about Zacchaeus. It's about Jesus and how He treats people. He paid attention to the guy on the sidelines. The guy who annoyed everyone else. The guy nobody was noticing. The guy I bet nobody cared to try to learn his name.

The guy that Jesus made sure to know and use his name. And by the way, He does the same for you.

Jesus knows your name, too.

THIS is how God sees us. Yes, He is the God that created the whole universe and everything in it. Yes, He is the God who has always been around and our brain can't even comprehend that. He also knows you personally.

APPLICATION

4 MINUTES

Okay, all of this might feel a little ridiculous to you. Maybe the whole idea of faith feels a little cray, a little far-fetched. That's okay. Like Zacchaeus, the best thing for some of us to do this week is to find a way to see for ourselves what Jesus is like. Zacchaeus probably had no intention of totally changing his life when he first got up that tree. But he was just taking the first step toward seeing Jesus for himself.

No matter what you think about God or faith or Christians, I want you to know this...

It's personal because Jesus knows your name.

For some people, that doesn't always sit well. You might have questions about that, you might have doubts about that and that's okay...but what would it look like for you to hop up in that tree to get a better look...to rethink or reimagine what God is like...to start asking some of those questions?

Maybe those questions might sound like:

- **What is God like...really?**
- **What does God say about me?**
- **What does God say about the people around me?**

Basically, Jesus changed the way everybody thought about God. There is just something that happens when we recognize that this God of the universe is a personal God. It changed Zacchaeus' life. It's already changed the lives of so many others.

And it doesn't stop there. We've talked about how powerful it is to be known personally by God. That He knows your name, He knows you, and He cares about you. But if that's true for you, that's also true for the person next to you, and your siblings, and your parents, and that kid at school you avoid or that teacher you can't stand.

Here's what I'm getting at: **A relationship with Jesus is always personal.** It's personal for you and for me. So let me ask, how can we make it personal for others?

Your piano teacher, your lacrosse coach, the person you know in science class, the girl who somehow always ends up in your group projects, the guy who gets on your nerves, your best friend's little brother, the guy who (maybe) forgot your name that one time—they all matter, just like you.

And here's why that's a big deal: **the people around you may not know God cares about them personally until YOU care about them personally.**

The best way to do this may start with some of the easiest steps you've ever heard:

1. **Learn their names.**
2. **Learn the right way to pronounce their names.** Here's something you should know: if your name is something like John you may not have experienced something like what I'm about to tell you, and this is a bigger deal than you may think. You know how annoying it is when someone writes your name wrong on your Starbucks cup? Or that substitute teacher who reads your name off a roster in a super weird way? Now, imagine that happening every day or every week times 10. Awful, right?
3. **Use their names when you see them.**

I get it, this seems so basic, but that's why it's a big deal. Knowing someone's name is the absolute simplest thing we can do to communicate that someone matters. And if someone feels like they don't matter, it can also have a huge impact.

So an easy way to do this is with people younger than you. Think about a couple years ago—what if you had some upperclassmen who genuinely took an interest in you and your life...how would that have made you feel? Upperclassmen, do that for some freshmen or sophomores. Freshman and sophomores, find some middle-schoolers you can invest in or at least begin to call by name.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

We have a personal God. He also happens to be a personal God who is also mind-blowingly powerful, ridiculously creative, and overly graceful...but He still knows your name and He calls you by it.

One of the greatest ways that we can point people to this kind of personal God is by modeling what it looks like to be personal with others. That's why we have small groups, by the way. We believe every person here is loved and known personally by Jesus and because of that, we want you to always have a group of people who know you personally, who know your name and know your story. No one should come in the door and feel like they don't fit in or nobody knows them. Jesus always made it personal with the people around Him. And you can too...by simply knowing their names.



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
