

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Game On

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Well, welcome all seven campuses, including our newest campus. Can we give it up at all of our campuses for our Capitol Hill campus opens this weekend. Can we give it up for that? I want you to know that we got our C of O on Friday and it was delivered on Saturday. We were not nervous. This was good for our prayer lives, I'll tell you that. But excited, we kick out the three part series this weekend, 'Naming, Healing, and Sending'. Here we go.

When Diana Nyad was nine years old, she stood on a beach in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She asked her mom a question that would totally altered the trajectory of her life. She said, where's Cuba? Her mom pointed towards the horizon and said its right over there. You can't see it, but it's so close, you could almost swim there. 20 years later in 1978 Diana Nyad would attempt to do just that. She swam 78 miles in 42 hours, but she fell short of her goal. The goal of becoming the first person to swim across the Straits of Florida would lie dormant for more than three decades. When she turned 60 Diana figured it was probably now or never, her second attempt was cut short because of an asthma attack, her third attempt failed when she was stung by a Portuguese Man of War and her fourth attempt ended with nine jellyfish stings. Then on the morning of August 31st, 2013 Diana Nyad would make one last attempt, 53 hours later, she would swim ashore in Key West. Now here's a picture and I'm going to tell you something. This looks like someone who just swam 110 miles, right? Tongue was so swollen, she could barely talk, but she got these words out, she said, I have three messages.

- One, we should never ever give up
- Two, you're never too old to chase your dreams
- And three, it looks like a solitary sport, but it takes a team.

Now, how did Diana do what did never been done before? How did she endure the physical pain and the mental anguish and why did she refuse to give up even after four failed attempts? I think it goes back to a moment on her fifth birthday, her father, Aristotle Nyad, invited Diana into his den and he said, I have been waiting so very long for this day. Now you are five, today is the day you are ready to understand the most significant thing I will ever tell you. Aristotle Nyad opened an unabridged dictionary and he pointed to her name Nyad. He said, tomorrow you will go to your little preschool and you will ask your little friends if their names are in the dictionary and they will tell you no, you are the only one, you're the special one. Then Aristotle pointed to the page and said, your name is Nyad first definition; from Greek mythology the nymph that swam in the lakes, oceans, rivers and fountains to protect the waters for the Gods. Listen to me darling, because now is coming the most important part. Next definition; A girl or woman champion swimmer, Darling, this is your destiny. How did Diana Nyad swim the Straits of Florida, how did she do? Listen, when the shark circled and the jellyfish stung, when dehydration and hallucination set in, how did she do it? I want to tell you how she did it, it was her father's name and her father's name was her narrative. I want you to juxtapose that with this, at the end of our services, we often pronounce a blessing that's about 3,400 years old. It's the priestly blessing.

“May the LORD bless you and keep you; May the LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; May the LORD turn His countenance to you, and give you peace.”

But there's a little postscript that I think packs the punch. God says, so they shall put my name on them. They shall what? Put my name on them and I will bless them. Well, what does that mean? Well, it's the same Hebrew word used in Genesis four when it says that the Lord set a mark on Cain. It's the same Hebrew words that used to put something on the altar. It's the same word used to put a ring on someone's finger. We'll come back to that one. See, God puts his name on his people. Can I tell you who God is? Jehovah Rapha, God our healer; Jehovah Shalom, God our peace, Jehovah Jireh, God our provider; Jehovah-nissi, God our banner, and over time his name becomes our identity. His name becomes our destiny. His name becomes our narrative.

July 2nd, 2016 I'm at an altar praying a brave prayer, a prayer that I prayed hundreds of times. God, would you heal my lungs. For more than 40 years there weren't 40 days I didn't go without an inhaler. Something happened July 2nd we're three days from celebrating three years of God healing my asthma. How does that happen? God put his name on me. He said, I am Jehovah Ropha and God healed my lungs and his name has become my narrative. God wants to put his name on you. Now, how does that happen? Well, John 1:12 *"to as many as have received him to them, he gave the power to become children of God."* That same John wrote in his epistle, first John 3:1 *"what great love the father has lavished on us that we should be called the children of God."* Guess what? If you are called the children of God, what does that mean? It means that you are called by his name. Listen, if we could wrap our minds around that, we could swim the Straits of Florida.

So Aristotle Nyad opened an unabridged dictionary. We open our Bibles; more than 400 names for God in scripture, each one revealing a different dimension of God's character. But we do more than that, those names reveal our identity. I want to go all the way back to the book of Genesis. We'll end up in Revelation and we will make a few pit stops in between.

Genesis one; God commissions Adam to take care of his creation and there's a moment that is so easily over-looked. Genesis 2:19, *"God brought the animals to Adam to see what he would call them and whatever Adam called every living creature, that was its name."*

Let me show you a picture this, anybody have any idea what this cute little creature is? This, my friends, is a pink fairy armadillo. I think one of my favorite names. Now, I have no idea how long this took, I have no idea how this went down and I don't know who had more fun; Adam naming the animals or God laughing at some of the names that Adam came up with. Here's what I know for sure, there's a playful side to God's personality that is often overshadowed by his omnipotence. And if we miss it, we miss it. This is a moment and this is part of our relationship with God. Do not tell me God does not have a sense of humor. Have you seen the backside of a baboon? I have a hunch that Adam gave him two names, one when the baboon was coming at him and then he's walking away ahh, no, no, that's a baboons right there, okay. Now here's my point and this is profoundly important; God gives Adam, are you ready for this, naming rights. This is a sacred responsibility. This involves tremendous authority. This is a prophetic privilege.

It's not just calling something what it is. It's calling out what it can be and that's what God has called us to; naming or rename me. It has the power to alter identities, to alter destinies. Listen; when God wants to catalyze change, he changes names. I am, adds an am to the end of Abram and it becomes Abraham. He says to Jacob, you are Israel. Jesus says, hey, Simon, your name is Peter, and Saul becomes Paul. So, should it come as any surprise that you get to the end of the story Revelation 2:17 it says this; *"to him who overcomes, I will give a white stone with a new name engraved on the stone"*. A new what? A new name engraved on the stone and I love this little nuance, *"which no one knows or understands except him who receives it."*

Listen, if you're pregnant, can I take a little bit of pressure off? It is really hard naming our children is it not or is that just Lora and I? Like you want to get it right but then even more you don't want to get it wrong. And so naming is like, I don't know, there's a little bit of pressure here with this thing. Listen; whatever name you give your children, it's just a placeholder. It's not their real name. Listen, there's gonna come a moment when we cross the space time continuum and our creator's going to reveal a name that is as unique as our fingerprint. And I think in that moment everything is going to make sense and it's going to be absolutely unique to you. And guess what? It's not just engraved on a stone; it's engraved on God's hands. Isaiah 49:16 *"I have written your name on the palms of my hands"*. I just decided to do something. What would that be like if I wrote the names of my children? I kept looking down, my hand; I had to choke back tears because I loved them. They're my flesh and blood? I would give my life for them. Now, I could only write it on one hand cause the other hand would have looked terrible. Do you understand this is plural? The amplified version says, *"I have tattooed a picture of you on the palm of each of my hands."*

Isaiah 43 few chapters before; *"He created you, O Jacob and he who formed you O Israel."* and this is so fascinating because God uses both of Jacob's names. Did you pick that up? It's not unique, but it's pretty unique. He is saying, okay, who you were and who you are and then God says this, *"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name."* God knows your name.

I had a fun flashback this week when I was in college traveling our basketball team on the weekend. We'd occasionally go to some of these country churches in Missouri and we'd teach Sunday school or we'd form a choir and sing and I remember one church in particular, the pastor said, hey, it's great to have the basketball team from Central Bible College and then introduced our coach and said, hey, it's great to have my good friend. Awkward pause, what was your name again? Yeah, we did not let him live that down. That was actually a ton of fun. God does not forget your name, doesn't just know your name, he knows your real name. And you want to figure out who you really are; you've got to get to know God. Why? Because God knows you better than you know you. Listen; if you're going to reach your full potential, you've got to be in relationship with the one who gave it to you in the first place. You got to let God put his name on you and then you grow into that identity.

Let me switch gears a little bit. There's power in naming things now that certainly includes but it's not limited to people. I think naming can release us from the shame of secrecy. Naming can release us from the shame of silence. I think naming is one way we take things captive and make them obedient to Christ. Now, sometimes it's naming what's wrong, like a doctor's diagnosis.

And sometimes it's naming what's right, like a gratitude journal. But one way or the other you've got to name it and when you do your exercising you're prophetic muscles. Now, in the Old Testament naming is next level, I mean, wow. They named wells and trees and rocks and altars and columns. I love this; they named columns in the temple. Now we have this 128 year old car barn with lots of columns, I'm not sure that we're going to name all of those columns but we are going to name the building and I figured this might be as good a week as any to do that. And now, before I do that, let me back up the truck just a little bit. In 2006, we turned to crack house into a coffee house; we had to figure out what to call it. Now, we actually took a survey of our congregation 13 years ago and we actually took some suggestions. Would you like to know a few of your ideas?

- Holy Grounds
- Jehovah Java, probably not
- This one, pretty creative He Brews

Now here's what's fun. One of the names that we pitched was Ebenezers, but it didn't win the popular vote. And I think the reason why I didn't is because of word association. I say Ebenezer, you say scrooge, right? But there's this wonderful word 1 Samuel 7:12, Samuel built an altar to God and he names it Ebenezer. And it means 'hither to the Lord has helped us'. And there was just this moment where there were so many Ebenezer moments, so many miracles along the way. I mean, four people offer more money for it than we did two of them real estate developers, we should not own it. And then we had to go before the zoning committee. Do you know how hard it is to get a residential property rezoned commercial? I mean miracle after miracle. And at some point we just said, we just have to call it what it is; "hither to Lord has helped us." And then we had a little bit of fun. Hey, you know what? Let's take good out of the equation, 'so far, so God' right this is not a good thing, this is a God thing. And so hear me, hear me, Ebenezers is not a coffee house. It's an altar to God that happens to serve coffee and every penny of profit then we give to kingdom causes.

Miracle Theater, same thing; what do we call it? Well, in 1960 a guy named R. W. Schambach was doing a revival in DC and felt led as he walked down Eighth Street one day to lay hands on a movie theater and pray that God would turn it into a church. Two years later, that theater, at the time the academy theater became the People's Church and for 49 years, the People's Church served this community and then they did something that will forever rank as one of the most courageous things I've ever witnessed in my life. A church whose entire history, entire identity had been in one location for 49 years has the courage to say, we're going to hand the baton to National Community Church. Now that is a miracle. Here's the rest of the story. Whenever R. W. Schambach would leave town, he'd leave a church behind. And every one of those churches, whatever city it was in, was called a Miracle Temple. And so we thought, let's tip our cap a little bit and let's call it what it is, The Miracle Theater.

And that brings us to this city block that God has given to us. Our new Capitol Hill campus begins meeting there this weekend. And can I do a quick little show and tell, three pictures? We have a picture from a hundred years ago, when it was a Navy Yard, car barn and I think there's some mechanic sitting in what is now our event venue. Isn't this incredible? And then this is so fun. We got our hands on an audio recording that's 70 years old from the car barn. In fact you

can play it, you can hear the street cars, a little ding of the bell as those cars would go in and out of that building, isn't that beautiful?

Now, a year ago, I want to show you what it looked like. It was a loading dock that was 30 feet wide, maybe 60 feet deep. But guess what, we had a vision. We saw what it could be and at our consecration service last Sunday night can I show you what it looks like now? We'll, there it is, that is an amazing transformation but listen to me, listen to me, not as amazing as the transformation that God is going to do in people's lives. Can I get an amen right there?

For most of its history, 770 M Street was the Navy Yard Car Barn. In 1988 it was painted blue, very blue. This week we literally you need to drive by, we started taking the blue out of the Blue Castle and there is some beautiful brick underneath it. Phase one is our event venue, phase two kids ministry and Child Development Center, and then the vision for phase three is a mixed use marketplace and co-working space. Why? Because the church belongs in the middle of the market place. And this is so fun, in 1805 President Thomas Jefferson issued an executive order to build an Eastern Market across the street from the Navy Yard. Can I tell you where at 7th and L street SE. Now some of you know this, it's at Seventh and C Street SE, but I would kind of like to think that by building it right on the property that Thomas Jefferson envisioned, we might be fulfilling an executive order that's 214 years old.

So, what are we going to call this? Well, it's going to be lots of things, there will be lots of names, the event venue, marketplace, co..., all of it. You've got to name it, but for most of its history, it was the last stop on the red line, route 54 it's a place where street cars were repaired and rerouted. One historian said it this way, the building was used to turn around street cars, readying them for their next trip through DC. You know what? Sometimes your destiny is hidden in your history. Can we be bold enough to believe that a building that was used to turn around street cars maybe just maybe would help turn around thousands of people's lives. And so I think we'll just call it what it is, Turnaround, now, birth certificate, Capital Turnaround, we'll put little capital in front of it. But, our creative team, threw a few things at the wall, we might thought it might be fun to give a little sneak peek. Now I don't have a neuralyzer so we cannot make you forget this picture. Understand it's a rough draft; it is evolving, but look right there at the corner of 7th and L Street. Can we give it up for the Capital Turnaround?

All right, let me change lanes again. I'm going to double back to one story in the book of Judges and we will close with this. An Angel of the Lord appears to a man named Gideon like all of Israel he is living in fear, he's hiding from the Midianites who are oppressing the Israelites. An Angel of the Lord appears to him and addresses him as not just Gideon, get this mighty man of fearless courage. Who you talking to? Gideon has, let's just say it this way, he doesn't see himself the way God sees him and that is our fundamental problem. Gideon does what most of us do. Comes up with a laundry list of excuses as to why he can't possibly do what God has called him to do. Why? Because he hasn't put God's name on yet. Now this is just like the 10 spies who go into the Promised Land and what do they say? We look like grasshoppers in their eyes. Well, that's your problem; you're looking in the wrong mirror. Gideon says, my clan is the poorest and I am the least in my father's house, like can you say inferiority complex? He's focused on what he does not have, he's focused on who he is not.

Listen, your deficiencies don't matter to an omnipotent God. His power is made perfect in weakness. God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called. Now, there is no place for pride but I think we have a problem that's equal to or greater than it's called false humility. Let me tell you what it is, false humility is thinking of yourself as anything less than who God says you are. It's thinking of yourself as anything less than who you are in Christ and in Christ is the key. So you may be in crisis this weekend, but you're in Christ. Do you hear me? You may be in crisis, but you're in Christ. You may be in over your head, but you're in Christ. You may be knee deep in the big muddy that we talked about a few weeks ago, but you are in Christ. I want to make sure we remember who we are.

- You are the image of God, Genesis 1:26
- You're the apple of God's eyes, Zachariah 2:8
- You are God's workmanship, Ephesians 2:10
- You are God's Signet Ring, Haggai 2:23 *'I will take you, oh Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,' D, 'and will make you like a signet ring;*

Do you understand that the signet ring was the symbol of ancient authority? It would have been emblazoned with a family crest. It was all the authority that anyone needed to do anything. You are so powerful. You have so much authority. And some of you have no idea. Because of this thing called false humility, it doesn't honor God one iota. It's a lack of faith. The same spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in us, but that's not all. Ephesians 2:6 says, *"God raised us up with Christ"*. So it's almost like we walked out of the tomb with him and get this and seated us in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. So, we all have down days, but even on our down days, we're still seated in the heavenly realms with Christ. Listen, you can put your circumstances between you and God and it will get in the way at every turn and you will lose faith. Or you can put God between you and your circumstances. Listen, is your theology going to conform to the reality around you? Or is the reality around you going to conform to your theology, who God is and who God says you are?

So let me go back to Gideon one more time, almost done. God dismantles his inferiority complex, mighty man of fearless courage. Then he tells Gideon tear down his father's idol to Baal. Okay, now it's gonna get real up in here, right? Gideon is afraid to do it by day, so he does it by night, baby steps. He tears down the altar and the entire town ticked off. But I love this; Gideon's father comes to his defense. He says, if Baal is a god, let him contend for himself because someone pulled down his altar and then he changes his own son's name from Gideon. Did you know he had another name? Jerubbaal, listen, he goes from a guy who was afraid of his own shadow, to someone who tears down idols to a false god. Are you kidding me? How does that kind of transformation, this is someone who God has put his name on.

Judges 6:34 amplified version says, *"the spirit of the Lord."* Oh man, this is so good, *clothed Gideon with himself*, clothed Gideon with himself. This is very unique language, very unique sequence in the text *"and took possession of him"*. Now remember that priestly blessing, Lord, bless you, keep you make his face shine, put his name on us. It literally means to put clothes on. Listen, God takes Gideon into the fitting room and puts Gideon on like a pair of pants. And guess what? God fits Gideon like like pair of skinny jeans. God is not just with Gideon God is on Gideon and that is how Gideon gets his game on.

Nothing has changed. Can I tell you how you get your game on? You let God put his name on you. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, your name on the palm of his hand. It's powerful. You gotta let God put that name on you. I do not have time for this, I want to take time. Be strong in the Lord, and in his mighty power. How? Put on the full armor of God, you have got to buckle the belt of truth around you. Listen, the breastplate of righteousness, your feet fitted with the gospel of peace. You got to hold that shield of faith. You got to put on the helmet of salvation and you've got to swing the sword of the spirit. That is the only way we're going to get where God wants us to go. Listen, the story of Gideon, God, putting on Gideon is the story of what God wants to do in you.

So Sunday night we have this consecration service, consecrated a building, but that's not what it was about. It was about you and me consecrating ourselves to God again. Joshua 3:5, *"Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you."* We want to do something amazing for God, but that's not our job, that's God's job. God is the one who does amazing things for us. Our job is to consecrate ourselves, and if we do our job, God's going to do his job. He's going to show up and show off his power, his glory, his goodness. Let me tell you what consecration is, setting apart for a special purpose, it's seeking first the Kingdom of God, it's living for the applause of nail, scarred hands. It's fully surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit, it's my utmost for his highest, and it's one more thing. It's believing that I am who God says I am.

So I want to invite our worship teams, all of our campuses, you can come, I want you to get ready because we're gonna sing this song and I'm going to give you a one final footnote. Listen, the only ceiling on what God can do in you and through you is your consecration, that's it. If you stay humble and stay hungry, there's nothing God can't do in you or through you. And I love this moment, one of God's names is Jehovah Shalom, God, our peace. Can I tell you where it comes from? It comes from this encounter that Gideon has with God. God says, peace be to you. Do not fear. So what does Gideon do? He builds an altar to the Lord and names it Jehovah Shalom. Would you build an altar to God this weekend? Would you consecrate yourselves to God again this weekend? Would you let God put his name on you? What do you need? Do you need peace that passes understanding? Let Jehovah Shalom put his name on your circumstance. Do you need healing? Let Jehovah Rapha put his name on you. Do you need salvation? Let Jesus put his name on you. Amen.