

October 10

Nehemiah 7, 11-12

There were a great many names to be digested in today's reading. I do not for a moment expect you will remember many, if any of those names, but they are faithfully recorded and as in so many other scripture passages, the complete pedigree of each name is given.

By creating this list, Nehemiah shows that he is an all-star leader on multiple counts. Today it is in the area of administration and data tracking. Many of us wonder why in the world this would take up so much room in the Bible and why God would want us to read it at all!

I have a theory. Because every person is important. And the total number of people is important. Nehemiah noticed a problem – the walls are done, but there are not enough people to defend the city or make it thrive.

A leader has to make a decision – how many people need to live here? Who will they be? How will we get them here? In order to do this, he has to know his data – how many are currently in Jerusalem, and in surrounding towns. How much redistribution is necessary? He can make decisions because somebody was counting. Somebody was tracking names.

I remember my first year in ministry with InterVarsity. I came to my supervisor and said “This year we saw 21 people come to faith in Jesus – a new record for our chapter!” I was counting every hand raised, every card filled out and every secondhand story that I heard. He said “Great! Get me a list of their names and let me know if each is being disciplined. When I did that, I actually came up with six real people. Each one mattered to God, but when I got accurate information my priorities changed – around making disciples, not just trying to pad my statistics. Every person mattered to God, not just my self-perception of ministry success.

This is probably why Nehemiah was painstaking in getting every name written down. He was interested in leading well and you lead well when you value people and track your data.

When you do, you know when health of an organization is in decline or improving. You know when your plans are working or failing. Sure, it takes energy to track your people. But it is time well spent. Because every single one of them matters to God. When you track what they are doing, you show that you love them and value them.

So, luckily the Bible is not all a list of people and plans. But we can sure learn an important leadership lesson from Nehemiah in this passage – just by seeing how meticulous he is in tracking people.

So if you lead a small group – pay attention to your people. If you lead a ministry- pay attention to your people. If you lead a church – pay attention to your people. Because every last one matters.