



Dear Friends,

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze... Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth — everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. (Isaiah 43:1-2, 6-7)

"What's in a name?" Juliet Capulet famously asked from a balcony as she pined for her love, Romeo Montague. While she makes a good point that roses would smell the same whether we called them roses or pencils or rubbish bins, the way the story of Romeo and Juliet ends makes us realise that sometimes there's a lot in a name.

Ask my niece. She received a notice a few months ago that she was being summoned for jury duty. In Beaumont, Texas, you have to call the afternoon before the date you're supposed to report. At that time, you're told whether you actually have to go to the courthouse. The automated message said that those with last names beginning with A, B, S, or T could stay home. Everyone else would have to report. "Looks like I have to report for jury duty," she told her parents over the phone a few minutes later as she made arrangements for them to pick up Taylor and Mary Ellen at school. As they talked a little longer she said, "Those lucky A's and B's and S's and T's..."

And then she noticed the summons. The one with her official, legal name on it. Her hyphenated legal name: Taylor-Zummo. With a T!

What's in a name? How about all day at the courthouse? Lori Zummo would

have had to spend a long one there. Lori Taylor-Zummo was off the hook. Sometimes, there's a lot in a name.

Ask anyone who's ever had a name they didn't care for very much. The Bible makes mention of many names like that. The name Abel sounds like the Hebrew for "futility," and we know that his name fit his tragically shortened life. "Jacob" carries a meaning of "greedy" or "deceiver"; don't you know he loved being called that. And couldn't you imagine that a name like "Exalted Father" (Abram) would feel like salt in the wound after 75 years of childlessness? Yeah, there are folks who still carry names like those — names that feel like hundred-pound weights on their shoulders.

Failure	Dropout
HIV-Positive	Addict
Bastard	Divorced
Single Mother	Slapper
Mentally Ill	

Teenagers live long school days with names like "Geek" or "Loser" or "Fat" or "Ugly." Wives who live long marriages with husbands, or husbands with wives, who spew venomous names like "Stupid" or "Useless" - or worse - and never hear them speak their given name with love, tenderness or respect. Children who have to hear their parents call them "Worthless" or "Bad" and start to believe it.

What's in a name?

Ask any bearer of a name like that, Juliet, and you'll get an earful! A name can hurt. It can cause you to hate what you see in the mirror every day. It can make a person afraid to try anything. Convince a person that he or she has no purpose or place in the world. Frighteningly, quite often, the worst kind of name can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The prophet Isaiah brought his enslaved people a message: they

In this edition Stephen Taylor writes our leading article. It also appears in the magazines of Bromley Methodist Church & Bromley URC