

Living Up To Your Name

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A popular cliché says, “There’s nothing in a name.” That’s an overstatement, to say the least. Would you name your daughter Jezebel?

Names in Scripture often have significance. My name is Joseph, the name Rachel gave to her firstborn son (Genesis 30:24). The name means “add,” in keeping with her hope that *“the Lord shall add to me another son.”*

Sometimes a name reflected the person’s character. Jacob’s name means supplant or deceive. Sure enough, in his early years Jacob took undue advantage of his brother and hoodwinked his father. God later changed Jacob’s name to Israel, meaning strive or wrestle with God (Genesis 32:28). Jacob had wrestled with a physical manifestation of God as he sought His blessing. No longer would he obtain what he desired by underhanded methods. The change in names coincided with a change in character.

People didn’t always live up to their name, however. While the prophet Micaiah (“who is like Yahweh?”) behaved consistently with that honorable name (1 Kings 22:14), his nemesis Zedekiah didn’t. Zedekiah means “Yahweh is righteous,” which is certainly true. But Zedekiah was anything but righteous and didn’t really respect the Lord righteousness or His righteous word (1 King 22:24).

If you are in Christ, you are a Christian, the name the disciples were called in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Luke used a peculiar word for “called” which indicates that the Lord Himself gave that name (see Isaiah 62:2 where a new name was prophesied). It means one who belongs to Christ, one who follows Christ. It differs little, if at all, from a disciple (learner-follower). Let each one of us strive to live up to the noble name “Christian”!

Faith’s Fundamentals

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, ASV). A healthy understanding of faith comes from digging into the entirety of the book of Hebrews, but especially the 11th chapter which many call “faith’s hall of fame.” Observe:

Faith is a matter of assurance and conviction; it is not mere opinion. It is “the “assurance” or “conviction” of “things not seen. It is not, as Carl Sagan once remarked, “belief in the absence of evidence,” or, in the words of one anonymous schoolboy, “the power of believing what you know ain’t so.” Opinions come and go; feelings are here today and gone tomorrow; but the assurance and conviction of a genuine faith serves as an unshakable foundation for life.

Faith is inseparably linked to obedience to God. Abel, by faith, offered sacrifice to God; Enoch, by faith, pleased God; Noah, by faith, obeyed God by building the ark *“to the saving of His house.”* Abraham, by faith, *“obeyed and went out . . .”* In fact, all those souls commended for faith in this chapter are so commended, not because their faith did nothing, but because their faith did something – because it was obedient to God’s will.

Faith trusts that God “is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). The wandering Israelites of Exodus didn’t question the existence of the one true God of heaven and earth as Pharaoh did (*“I know not the Lord”* Exodus 5:2). But they were guilty of unbelief (Hebrews 3:19). Yes, they believed in God’s existence and that He had done marvelous works, but they didn’t trust Him to see them through the trials of the wilderness. Their worrying and constant complaining revealed a serious faith problem! And the same is true for you and me today; we may believe that God exists and is all-powerful; but do we cast all our cares upon Him, believing that He cares for us? (1 Peter 5:7)

Faith continues – is faithful – to the end. The similarity of the words “faith” and “faithful” is no accident. Those of Hebrews eleven pressed forward through good times and bad, through joys and tribulations; and Jesus, the noblest example we could ever hope to imitate, *“endured the cross, despising the shame”* (Hebrews 12:2). Our Savior *“endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself”* for us, that we might enjoy salvation (Hebrews 12:3). Our faith must neither flag nor fail. We must *“be faithful unto death”* (Revelation 2:10).

How does your faith measure up?

--Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via *Old Paths*

Forever Young

Old men can be self-conscious. They know their eyebrows are bushier, that their nose hairs protrude, and that the hairs on their ears are livelier than the hairs on their bald spot.

But ask an older man how old he is on the inside. You might be surprised to learn that the inner man is in his 20’s or 30’s. He sees himself as a young man trapped in an elderly body.

There is a sense in which we grow old and our bodies decline. But for Christians the inner person is renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). In that way our spiritual vitality matches the self-image of the person on the inside looking out.

Young people who forget God can face evil days too. Many young people are crushed by broken relationships, drug abuse, and dead-end futures. They are old before their time. To be both young and authentically Christian is a great blessing because such people enjoy the advantages of the inward spiritual person and the outward physical person.

Whether we are young or old, God calls us to be renewed from within. What are you doing today to be young at heart?

--John H. Williams (via Power for today)