

## What's in a Name? Finding Yourself in Him

“What in the world,” I declared as I peered out the front blinds. “Kailey, get out there and tell your brother to get in the house.”

The wind was whipping through our little cove, swift dark clouds had begun to sputter, and Joshua, my five year old, was out meandering around the cove barefooted like the village idiot. I just shook my head.

As Kailey loped down the front yard, I watched Joshua turn, lean defiantly into the wind, and set his jaw like flint.

“She won’t be able to turn him,” I thought.

Sure enough, she spoke her piece, stomped angrily, and huffed back up the yard to the house to tattle. It was a well traveled road.

As Kailey began to dispose her sentiments regarding my role as parent she was soundly interrupted with a shrill squawking akin to that of the dying squall of a Mexican Seagull. We exchanged looks. The sound was coming up the front steps. It was Joshua.

“I didn’t do it...” Kailey declared just as Joshua flung open the door. However, he bopped in with a big smile on his face, although still whooping like a rabid crane.

“What’s wrong with you boy,” I said, “Don’t you know we got neighbors?”

I reached to cover his mouth, but he wrestled free.

“Daaaddy!” He cried, looking at me like I was the idiot. He shook himself off, took a deep breath, and promptly went back to hollering.

“Josh!” I lamented, “What are you doing!!!?”

He leveled on me with a fierce look of righteous indignation and said boldly, “I’m JOSHUA daddy. I walked round dem big walls a Jerco. Now I’m shouting em’ down!”

I should’ve known. Since he’s been old enough to tote a trumpet I’ve been tooting his horn and telling him about the Joshua of the Bible, and he’s mighty eager to live up to his moniker. For example, when we go on family walks he insists on being out front. Why? He’s Joshua, fearless leader of God’s people. He loves his name. I over heard him thanking God for it the other day.

Many people don’t put much stock in the importance of names. I can understand. One of the biggest fellows I ever met was called “Tiny”. Yet oftentimes, names do matter, especially for those searching for their identity in this world. How many people do you suppose have grown up identifying with, and limiting themselves to, the disparaging names they were called as children? Maybe you’re one of them.

If you’ve been called hurtful things, I encourage you to spend some quiet time with Jesus. Look deep into His eyes, and listen to what He calls you. Thank goodness for Guidance Counselors, Moms, Dads, Pastors and Prophets, but their lengthiest opinions and loudest commands could never undo a single word whispered from the lips of the Lord- that is, if you will believe it.

God has never been opposed to changing people’s names mid stream either- Abram to Abraham, Simon to Peter, Saul to Paul just to recall a few. He used these new titles to challenge these men to begin to see themselves differently. These new names raised the bar of their expectations and gave each of them a glimpse into what God saw regarding their character. It’s only in the Lord we find our true identity anyhow. Did you know He already has a special new name picked out for those who trust Him? (*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.* **Revelations 2:17 KJV**)

But anyway- Recently, after reading the Bible my girl Kailey decided she wants me to start calling her Esther. I don’t know about that... but apparently she sees herself as a beautiful young godly Queen who the Lord has raised up to help save His people. Cool! That’s exactly the way I see her. I know it’s the way her heavenly Dad does.

-Guy Sheffield 5-5-06