

What If Your Name Was Changed?

Have you ever heard of Joseph? No, not the Joseph who was the son of Jacob, or the Joseph who was the husband of Mary. This Joseph was the one who had his name changed to Barnabas by the apostles.

The name Barnabas means "Son of Encouragement." The apostles saw that Joseph was a great encourager. They saw that he was someone who made it a goal to edify and uplift others. He sold some land that he owned to help struggling disciples staying in the city of Jerusalem. Like Jesus, Barnabas was unselfish (Philippians 2:3-5).

But what exactly did his name "Son of Encouragement" mean? This name was tied to a Jewish figure of speech. The apostles gave Joseph this name because it was as if encouragement or consolation was his father. These qualities were a deep-seated part of his character; it was what his life was all about! Interestingly, Barnabas was the name he would go by from that time forward. Never again would he be called Joseph in the scriptures (Acts 9:27; 11:30; 13:1-3; 15:2, 36-41). Joseph positively impacted the church so much that the apostles changed his name!

Can you think of some other places in the Bible where terminology like this is used? What about John 17:21, where Judas (the fallen apostle who betrayed Jesus) is called the "son of perdition?" What about Mark 3:17, where the two brothers and apostles (James and John) were called the "Sons of Thunder?"

What if Jesus or His apostles had changed your name? What would you be renamed? What characteristics are so deep within you that it would appear that you had been fathered by it?

- Would you be called "Son of Peace" because you always seek peace and unity among God's people (Matthew 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:13)?
- Would you be called "Son of Service" because you are always looking for ways to serve and help others (1 Peter 4:9-10; Galatians 5:13)?
- Would you be called "Son of Generosity" because you seek to use your physical prosperity to bless and help others in need (Galatians 6:10)? That is exactly how Barnabas was in his life (Acts 4:36-37)!
- Would it be "Daughter of Gentleness" because you are constantly kind and gentle toward others (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:32)?
- Would it be "Daughter of Joy" because you always have a smile on your face due to your appreciation for the salvation God has provided for you through Jesus (Philippians 4:4; Galatians 5:22)?

Whatever we are about (whatever our true focus is in life) is what the apostles would have named us. From Barnabas, we learn that names are important in that they can reveal our true character.

Out of all the names we could be given in this life, the most wonderful and blessed name is Christian (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). When a person goes by the name Christian it means that they have repented of their sins, confessed the name of Jesus, and put Him on through baptism (Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; Galatians 3:26-27). Jesus died so we can wear this name and truly belong to Him. Have you done what is required to wear it?

