

What's in a Name?" – July 2, 2017  
By Wayne J. Schneider – Soli Deo Gloria

"What's in a Name?"  
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

The FBI raided the Southwood Psychiatric Hospital in San Diego for suspected medical fraud. After a full day of searching medical records, all of the agents were hungry. The Special Agent in charge called a pizza place to order dinner.

Snopes.com, a Web site that investigates urban legends, says that this conversation actually happened.

**Agent**: Hello. I would like to order 19 large pizzas and 67 cans of soda.

**Pizza Man**: And where would you like them delivered?

**Agent**: We're over at the psychiatric hospital.

**Pizza Man**: The psychiatric hospital?

**Agent**: That's right. I'm an FBI agent.

**Pizza Man**: You're an FBI agent?

**Agent**: That's correct. Just about everybody here is.

**Pizza Man**: And you're at the psychiatric hospital?

**Agent**: That's correct. And make sure you don't go through the front doors. We have them locked. You will have to go around to the back to the service entrance to deliver the pizzas.

**Pizza Man**: And you say you're all FBI agents?

**Agent**: That's right. How soon can you have them here?

**Pizza Man**: And everyone at the psychiatric hospital is an FBI agent?

**Agent**: That's right. We've been here all day and we're starving.

**Pizza Man**: How are you going to pay for all of this?

**Agent**: I have my checkbook right here.

**Pizza Man**: And you're all FBI agents?

**Agent**: That's right. Everyone here is an FBI agent. Can you remember to bring the pizzas and sodas to the service entrance in the rear? We have the front doors locked.

**Pizza Man**: I don't think so. \*Click\* (Kevin A. Miller, vice president, Christianity Today International; source: [www.vasthumor.isfunny.com](http://www.vasthumor.isfunny.com); and [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com))

Have you ever bargained with God? You know, “*Lord, if I do . . . then you will . . .*.” We want to negotiate for the best deal. But, God is in the Covenant business. All through the Old Testament, God makes covenants with People. These pledges of relationships are seeped in trust.

In the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, God approaches Abram, and assures him that his descendants will be “extraordinarily numerous.” Then, God changes Abram’s name, signifying a new juncture in their relationship. Sarai gains a new name change, too. She becomes Sarah. From her, kings and nations will come. This is a double blessing.

In second Corinthians, St. Paul says that we are “*new creations in Jesus.*” (5:17) When we give ourselves to God through Jesus, we are transformed. In this renovation, our character begins to change and we are molded into Christlikeness.

By their covenant with God, Abram and Sarai’s names are changed to Abraham and Sarah. They undergo God’s work in their lives, and their new names will become known throughout the years to come.

Jesus said to St. Peter, that his confession of who Jesus was, would become the rock upon which the Church is built. Of course, St. Peter didn't begin that way, but God molded him into what he was within. It required trust, forgiveness, and humility to bring him to true discipleship.

Steve Saint, a Christian worker was traveling through the country of Mali, when his car broke down. Marooned and alone, he tried to rent a truck but failed. Discouraged and anxious he remembered his dad, Nate Saint, a past missionary to Ecuador. When Steve was only five years old, native Ecuadorians speared his father to death along with four other missionaries. Now, three decades later, Steve finds himself questioning the death of his dad. Steve Pondered: *"I couldn't help but think the murders were capricious, an accident of bad timing."*

Then, he asked directions to a church, and some children led him to a small mud-brick house with a cross on it. A man introduced himself as Nouh af Atawa, and he shared his faith. When he became a Christian his family disowned him and his mother tried to poison him.

Steve asked Nouh why he paid such a price for becoming a "Follower of the Way," and he said, *"I know God loves me and I'll live with him forever."* Steve continued to ask *"Where did such courage come from?"*

Nouh clarified saying when he was young, a missionary gave him a book about martyrs who suffered for their faith. Then, he said that his favorite story was about five young men who risked their lives to share the Gospel to the people who lived in the Jungles of Ecuador. The story told of these men who were speared to death, even though they had guns and could have killed the natives. Astounded, Steve said, *"One of those men was my father."* It was Nouh's turn to be stunned. "Your father?" he exclaimed. (Adapted from Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good*, Multnomah, 2009, pp 400-401)

There are times when everyone has periods of doubt . . . even Abraham or Steve Saint, or you and I. So, what are we to do? Well, like Abraham, 1<sup>st</sup> we laugh . . . and then we listen to God.

Trust is compulsory for friendship or marriage or treaties, and our relationship with God. For Abram, now Abraham, the sign of the covenant was circumcision. Today, for “followers of the Way,” it is baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The core of learning to trust God is ‘letting go.’ When we do, we become our new name: Christian. Alleluia. Amen.