

Peter: Rock Star from Galilee

Foreword

I was on a middle school weekend retreat at Laurelville when the message of Jesus first made sense to me. I am a pastor now and have been working with students for 20 years. I recently spoke to 450 middle school students at the same camp in the beautiful Laurel Mountains of western Pennsylvania. I was excited to teach there, remembering how that retreat so long ago changed the course and direction of my own life. Besides setting me on a path of following Jesus, it also changed my name – literally.

Before we even loaded up the church van that Friday in 1985, I ran circles around the parking lot like any prepubescent kid would do when excited. (I was thinking about the cans of shaving cream I had stashed in my duffel.) I was a gangly, happy-go-lucky kid and not too socially conscious. In other words, I was your archtypal skinny nerd minus the glasses. That year's college intern, feeling the parental stares as he futilely tried to calm the group, corralled us for a lecture on the dangers of running in the parking lot. I was fairly new to the group, so looking at me he yelled, "Hey you...(stumbling for my name)... Marty... get over here." I must have reminded him of Marty McFly, the Michael J. Fox character in the new movie "Back to the Future." McFly was the classic nerd.

As soon as the name rolled off his tongue the other kids started laughing and from that time on I was known as "Marty." At first I was embarrassed, but by Sunday I had embraced my new name because it had given me a new sense of identity within the group. All weekend I was introduced to kids from other youth groups as "Marty" and they would laugh, but I liked it because it brought me attention that I never had before. Close friends and family still call me Marty -- and I answer them.

Peter: Rock Star from Galilee is about another man whose name was changed. Peter's impulsiveness and failures make him an easy character for both young men and women to relate to. As your students dive into this Bible study I have no doubt that they will be challenged and transformed by the lessons Sherree has assembled here. I've read Sherree's other character studies and I would say that this is the best one yet! The lessons

here will strengthen the faith of your students and your own faith at the same time. I would suggest it for anyone who wants to grow with a group of students.

Unlike my name change, which just gave me a new nickname, Biblical name changes had great significance. As Simon began to follow Jesus he was transformed from a fisherman into a man called “Peter,” the rock upon which Jesus would build his Church. Knowing Sherree for almost 10 years now, I would say that her name has changed in my book as well. At first she was just a parent of some of my students, then she became a trusted friend, and now I would call her a peer in ministry to students.

Jayson Samuels

Co-Founder and Family Pastor

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