

## A Good Name

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. Proverbs 22:1 What is in a name? Those who name their business want that name to represent them well and attract attention so that potential customers will be inclined to engage in commerce. A book or article title should utilize a few choice words to convey the general content of the message.

Those who name their children these days...well...I have no clue where many of them come up with the names and why they call their offspring such. Someone recently suggested to me that they throw something on the floor and write down whatever sound it makes. This is not what Solomon is referring to when he talks of a good name. A business may or may not live up to its name. So may the character of a child exceed or fall short of the meaning of his name.

My name means, "a dweller at the well". But I personally have very little interest in common social chatter and I generally exit such environments at the earliest convenience. This proverb speaks more to our reputation. Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right. Pr 20:11

The native American Indians would often wait until the character of the individual was established before a permanent name was given.

Moses was known for his meekness, David for mercy, Abraham for faith, Caleb for courage, and Thomas for doubting. But these associations probably came after their decease.

The good name mentioned here is something that we can establish while we are living. It is when you can be depended upon to do what is legally and morally right whatever the cost. It takes years to establish such a reputation and only but a few brief moments to demolish it. While some may defame our character, a good name will eventually overcome such scathing remarks. Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 1Peter 3:16 A good name is essential for good living.

Or, as the old proverb states: Fire, water, and a good name.

There seems to be a growing laxity among earth dwellers, today, to be careless about what others think of them. This, of course, is a virtue when it comes to being not conformed to this world. But its weakness will certainly be manifest when striving to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Rom 12:2 We dare not imagine that a good name will one day arrive in a neatly wrapped package upon our doorstep. If wishes were horses, beggars would ride. A good reputation must be earned and will only be obtained by resolute and principled action in our daily dealings with others.

A good name, then, is the reciprocal reward for our labors as we earnestly seek to ... Represent God's Name. Esau despised his birthright simply by his lack of care. The first step in securing a good name is to value it. It is no sin to be well thought of so long as it is for godly character. As Christians, we represent the image of God to the people of this earth. Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men ... written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. 2Cor 3:3

Our life may be the only Bible some folks will ever read. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. Acts 11:26 This was no creative title that they flippantly affixed to themselves; it was a good name well earned.

Honor our Parents. It is impossible to fulfill the first commandment with promise while owning a bad name. The black sheep will always bring shame to his parents. Children may mar a good family name with a few dark strokes. While Jacob attempted to live peaceably among the inhabitants of Canaan, his sons limited his good intentions by dealing deceitfully with the Shechemites. And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land. Gen 34:30

I have yet to see a bumper sticker read, "My child is an honorable inmate at the county correctional institute." Children's children are a crown to old men but only if they represent noble character.

Commerce in Business.

While some in carnal pursuits may seek a good name as a means to attain

wealth, it is still a solid principle with godliness at its roots. Word of mouth is often the best advertisement that a business can have. It can also be a major obstacle if we bear a poor reputation. He that hath an ill name is half hanged. One business client of mine said, "Cheat me once ... shame on you. Cheat me twice ... shame on me."

While some may attain wealth by their good name, the Wise Teacher instructs that we may have to forfeit great riches in lieu of a good name. This is where we often meet our challenge. A good name is not attained by conservatively protecting it from evil smudges, but by injecting good into every relationship we encounter. It is not to be won by gloriously scaling the highest mountain, but, rather, in the lowly trenches of our small daily tasks.

He that would be established in a good name must ...

I. Be True to His Word The lip of truth shall be established for ever. Pr 12:19 People have a right to depend upon us when we say we will do something. Better it is to say "no" and do it, than to say, "I will" and fail to do it. There are times when our plans may change. We cannot always help that. But we can inform the other of the change and ask for pardon. Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Titus 2:8

Another dimension of this is when people are habitually late. While we may not have said that we will be on time, it is a breach in an understood agreement. We show that we do not value the other's time by making them wait. Sometimes delays cannot be prevented, but habitual promptness will go a long way in establishing a good name.

II. Return Borrowed Items The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again. Ps 37:21 Often when we borrow something, it is to save the money of having to purchase the item ourselves. The early church had all things common Acts 2:44 and seemed to thrive on this principle. To use the possessions of another is often good stewardship and it creates a sense of brotherhood that honors Christ. However, it is easy to forget that the borrower is servant to the lender. Pr 22:7

This may prove frustrating at times, for some items may be in disrepair when we get them. Perhaps the tool is half worn out when it arrived and fully ready for retirement when we are finished. I wonder if this wasn't the case of the axe head that departed from the handle as the young student of Elisha was felling a beam. Alas, master! for it was borrowed. 2Kings 6:5

We have a solemn responsibility to return the item as soon as possible and in the same condition it was when it was entrusted to our care. In order to establish a good name we must forget about the money that it takes to return it in decent shape and reckon ourselves as a servant until the item is secured back to its owner.

### III. Associate with Godly People

We are influenced by the people we associate with more than we realize. It is difficult to rise above the company we keep. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Pr 13:20 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. 1Cor 15:33 Unfortunately, it seems that the atmosphere of any given setting usually declines to the lowest denominator.

We naturally gravitate toward those who are like spirits with our own. Therefore the people whom we befriend and esteem will inevitably have an immense impact upon whether we secure a good name or an ill one. While Christ was known as a friend of publicans and sinners, Matt 11:19 he carried no associations with their sins. Most people today who often find themselves in the company of sinners ought to closely examine their motives for being there, lest they become like those acquaintances and forfeit a good name.

IV. Be Driven by Integrity The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him. Pr 20:7 Integrity is doing what is right regardless of the circumstances. Job's wife was appalled that her husband would still retain his integrity under the dire circumstances that had fallen upon him. We are, likewise, tempted the most when things are not going well.

Like a teabag, our Christianity is often revealed of what flavor we are when we find ourselves in hot water. But, apart from our trials, we must be

consistent in our daily living as well. Though man may be fooled for a season, God sees through our eyeservice and will not allow us to have a good name for long if we do not embrace integrity. A good name is secured by quality workmanship done with a good attitude. Integrity makes no excuses but acknowledges and learns from mistakes.

#### V. Be Orderly and Consistent.

While many souls have been fanatically impressed with 'spirit led' Christianity, a good name is rooted in being predictable and consistent. Most of the unpredictable variety are simply hearts that have not endured the discipline of spirit that a good name calls for. Daniel's foes could find no fault in the man and knew that they would have to attack his strength: his orderly and consistent walk with his God.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Dan 6:10 Some, of our day, will leave their windows shut under such circumstances.

Others, who have not subjected themselves to such discipline, and, though they never did aforetime, will begin the practice just to buck the system. But Daniel's environment played no part in determining his movements, for his orderly course was already determined and the king's edict could not unsettle it.

VI. Seek the Good of Others They lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof. Pr 1:18, 19 As members of the kingdom we must reject the gain that comes from another's loss. Finders keepers, losers weepers shall be foreign to us. If it is not a good deal for all parties, it is not a good deal at all. Our counterparts seem to know whether we are seeking to exploit them or if we truly care for their well being.

There are people (even whole societies) that will automatically offer less for a product, even if the price is fair to begin with. VII. Let Actions Speak

Louder than Words Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find? Pr 20:6 Our behavior must match our belief. Our walk must measure up to our talk. Our character must be in conjunction to our confession.

Most of the time when men speak of their own merits, it is because they lack sufficient evidence to convince anybody of the fact. The more he spoke of his honesty, the faster we counted our spoons. While our own words can corrode our good name, the words of another cannot. A man who is secure and blameless in his actions cares little about the verbal assault to his character.

We don't speak great things ... we live them. - Justin Martyr  
Unfortunately, some of us may have inherited an ill name or else have defiled the one we have. Where there is life ... there is hope. It is never too late to begin the restoration process. Perhaps the Lord will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten. Joel 2:25

Zacchaeus seemed to be a man of ill repute among his countrymen. It was upon his recognition, repentance, and restitution that the salvation of the Lord visited his house. While the renovation of his name required him to part with a major portion of his great wealth, we are assured that the good name that he enjoys today was well worth the investment.

### A Good Name

You got it from your father; it was all he had to give,  
So it's yours to use and cherish for as long as you may live.

If you lose the watch he gave you, it can always be replaced,  
But a black mark on your name, son, can never be erased.

It was clean the day you took it, and a worthy name to bear,  
When he got it from his father, there was no dishonor there;

So make sure you use it wisely, after all is said and done,  
You'll be glad your name is spotless when you give it to your son.

