

# Guarding My Neighbor's Good Name

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

- A. The ninth commandment of 613 instructed Israel to protect the good names of their neighbors - Ex. 20:16
  - 1. Difficult, because the tongue is hard to control - James 3:2-8
  - 2. Few people realize the destructive power of the human tongue
  - 3. From a miss-spoken word, homes have been broken, reputations destroyed, and lives literally ruined and even ended
  - 4. That little piece of muscle that lies in your mouth behind your lips and between your teeth can bless or bruise, heal or hurt, love or lambast. It all depends upon how you use it.
- B. God made you accountable for your neighbors' well-being
  - 1. James 2:8-9; Rom. 15:2; Prov. 3:29
  - 2. That includes his name - Lev. 19:16-18

## I. A NAME IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION

- A. Prov. 22:1; Ecc. 7:1
- B. A reputation determines the level of respect one receives; no one puts confidence in a person who is dishonest or living sin
  - 1. Luke 2:52
- C. A reputation determines the response one receives
  - 1. Every Christian wants to be respected and received in a positive way
  - 2. The type of response we can expect will be determined by the kind of life others see us living
  - 3. "What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you are saying."
  - 4. The world will not believe what we say until they see what we believe.
- D. Your reputation is important because what people perceive you to be is usually a fair indicator of what you really are.
  - 1. Reputation is what others think of us; character is what we really are.
  - 2. As a general rule, reputation is a direct result of character. People think the way they do about you because of the way they see you act and live
- E. Our own reputations are valuable. We protect them diligently and pray that others will do the same.
  - 1. You cannot be responsible for what others do with your reputation, but you are responsible for what you do with theirs.

## II. A NAME CAN BE VANDALIZED

- A. It is a serious thing
  - 1. When one undermines the reputation of another, he is guilty of destroying that person's credibility with others.
  - 2. A woman was guilty of gossiping about her Bible class teacher. She was sorry and went to apologize to him and make restitution for her wrongdoing. He graciously accepted her apology and told her that if she wanted to make it all right that she should take a chicken, kill it, pluck it, carry its feathers to the top of the highest building in town and cast its feathers to the four winds. When this was done, she was to

return. She carried out his directive and came back. He looked at her and said, "Now go and collect every one of those feathers." She replied in surprise, "That's impossible!" He said, "So, it is impossible for you to take back all those things you have said about me."

3. The words that damage a good name can be forgiven, but they will never be forgotten by those touched by their poison.
  - a. God has absolutely no use for a gossip and a talebearer.
  - b. "The man who with the breathe lent him by heaven,  
Speaks words that soil the whiteness of a life;  
Is but murder, for death is given,  
As surely by the tongue as by the knife! (Jean Blewett)

B. It is a sad thing

1. Slander - "Communication of false statements injurious to a person's reputation."
  - a. We are guilty of slander when we knowingly lie about another person in an effort to harm his reputation.
  - b. We are guilty of slander when we repeat another's speculation without our first-hand knowledge of the matter
2. Lying - "A false statement deliberately presented as being true."
  - a. Whether we admit it or not, we are all guilty of lying at some point
  - b. 67% of Americans do not believe in absolute truth.
  - c. 91% of Americans lie on a weekly basis.
  - d. 20% freely admit to lying daily
  - e. 92% will lie to save face
  - f. 98% will lie to avoid offending someone
  - g. 87% will lie to or about someone else for personal advantage
  - h. Abraham the father of faith and Aaron the first high priest lied  
Ex. 32:24
3. Criticism - "statements made about another's actions and words in an effort to hurt his standing."
  - a. The carping critic is like a vulture. The vulture sees nothing but that which is dead and decaying. He does not see the flowers and the green grass or other living things around him.
  - b. A woman was looking out her window, watching her neighbor hang her wash on the clothesline. As she watched, she remarked to a friend, "Our neighbor sure isn't very clean. Just look at those streaks on her laundry." Her friend replied, "Those streaks are on your windows, not her clothes."
  - c. Sometimes it's sin in our hearts that moves us look for evil in others
4. Tale bearing - "The practice of sharing rumors about others."
  - a. The rumors may be true. But, even that does not give one the right to tear down another's name.
  - b. If we learn a secret about our neighbor, we should ask ourselves the question, "What would we want our neighbor to do if he heard the same thing about us?" And then, do it for him

5. Insinuation - "The practice of implying that something may be wrong with another."
    - a. Satan tried to use this tactic against Job - Job 1:9-11, 2:5
  6. Flattery - "Saying something good to a person that we would not say to another in his absence."
    - c. Flattery is a form of lying - Job 32:21-22
  7. Exaggeration - Increasing or decreasing any number of facts in the account to make matters look better or worse
  8. Silence - Remaining silent when an objection is morally mandated
    - a. One becomes party to the deception by failing to set the record straight.
    - b. Allowing someone else to destroy our neighbors' good name
    - c. Prov. 26:20-28
- C. It is a sinful thing - Prov. 12:22; Eph. 4:25; Prov. 6:16-19

### **III. A GOOD NAME SHOULD BE PROTECTED**

- A. Confront the gossip
  1. Be quick to stand for those who are being hurt by a gossip.
  2. We share in the gossip's guilt when we say nothing.
  3. Be aware that most gossips are sneaky people. They will turn their tongue on you, too.
  4. Every gossip that gossips to you, will probably gossip about you
- B. Correct the guilty
  1. Say nothing to anyone except God until you have spoken to the neighbor in need.
  2. Prov. 11:13, 17:9; 1Peter 4:8

#### Conclusion:

- A. When it comes to speaking of others, THINK first
  - T - Is it True?
  - H - Will it Help?
  - I - Is it Inspiring?
  - N - Is it Necessary?
  - K - Is it Kind?
- B. If it doesn't meet these qualifications, shut up.