

A Good Name Proverbs 22:1

Author James P. Lenfesty in a story titled “Catch of a Lifetime,” recounts a defining moment in the life of an 11 year old boy who had gone out fishing with his father on a lake in New Hampshire. It was the night before the opening of bass season and he and his father had gone down to the dock near the family cabin so that he could practice his casting. Suddenly his pole doubled over. He had hooked something...something heavy.

Excitement and wonder filled the wide eyed gaze of the boy who had just lifted from the dark waters a fish of great size. It was the largest bass this 11 year old boy had ever seen.

The father lit a match and looked at his watch. Stinging words silenced even the crickets and bullfrogs in the still air as the father announced to his son that he would have to throw the fish back. Bass season was still two hours away.

What are two hours in the grand scheme of things, anyway? No one was around? Who would know the difference? Who in their right mind could look squarely into the eyes of a young boy filled with exuberance one moment and utter despair in the next? Yet the father insisted. Never again would the boy catch such a grand fish.

But there was a bigger catch that day. Not in terms of a mammoth scaly fish. What he caught that day was a lesson in moral character. Lenfesty writes: “For, as his father taught him, ethics are simple matters of right and wrong. It is only the practice of ethics that is difficult. Do we do right when no one is looking? Do we refuse to cut corners...? We would if we were taught to put the fish back when we were young, for we would have learned the truth. The decision to do right...is a story we will proudly tell our friends and our grandchildren. Not about how we had a chance to beat the system and

took it, but about how we did the right thing and were forever strengthened.”

Character is something that is more than just taught. It is something that is caught through the observations of those who watch our actions to see if they measure up to what we say we believe. Character is only observable through our actions. We can say a person is honest, but we don't know for sure unless we see it displayed.

Proverbs 22:1 “A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.”

Proverbs 11:1 “The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are His delight.”

A good name is a matter of choice.
A good name is a matter of character.
A good name is a matter of conduct.

I. A GOOD NAME IS A MATTER OF CHOICE

What is in a name? It's a word or phrase by which a person, thing, or class of things is known. It is a word that expresses some quality considered characteristic or descriptive of a person or thing, often showing approval or disapproval. It is fame or reputation or character of a person.

I have different names by which people call me. Howard, Howie, Dad, Grandpa, Uncle, Cousin, Pastor, Mr. Son

Everett will sometimes call Arlie “Red” because he says she had red hair at one time.

Reputation is how people know you by what you do. We go into a store to shop and we are inundated with names of products. When we hear a product name we immediately think about its reputation.

If you go into a running store looking for shoes you have the reputations of Nike or New Balance or Puma or Asics to consider.

If you go into the store looking for laundry soap you have the names of Era, Tide, Cheer, Wisk, Gain, Oxy Clean or Snuggle.

Depending on the kind of car you may look for and how much money you have to spend the names of Bentley, Rolls Royce, Mercedes, Jaguar, Chevrolet or Plymouth or Ford call to mind their reputation or character as being expensive, luxurious, fast, family, durable, or economical.

When you were born you were given a name. Some choose to change their name – for whatever reason. Most elect to keep their birth name.

Notice what our verse says. Worth more than great riches is a name, but not just any name, worth more than great riches is a **good name**. Your name may be worth millions of dollars but is it a good name? Now you know we aren't talking about the name by which people know you. We're talking about reputation.

We're talking about character.

If I were to mention some names of the Bible you would automatically know them by their reputation or character.

Moses – leader

Joseph or Daniel – uncompromising

Judas – traitor

Paul – teacher/missionary

Solomon – wise

If people hear your name, what comes to their mind? The kind of name you have is a choice. A good name is of great value. It's priceless. It's something you cannot buy. It's not what you own. It's something you earn through hard work and godly character and it's something you have to work at to keep all your life.

Mention the name Mike Waters in Star Lake, NY and people instantly know who you're talking about. I didn't know my Uncle Mike very well, mostly stories. I would see him when we vacationed in NY and when he was in High school he spent a summer with us. Mom and Dad hoped to have a positive influence on him. He was not a trouble maker, but he hung around kids who weren't the best role models. There wasn't a whole lot to do in the small town of Black River. He built a tree fort in the woods and sometimes he would leave in the summer and not be seen or heard from for days. They lived across the road from the Black river. They lived in the town of Black River and across from the river Black river. Sometimes in the winter he would go across the street and sleep on the rocks by the river in nothing but a flannel shirt and jeans and an old wool blanket.

I'm not sure if he finished high school, but when at 18 he joined the army and served in Viet Nam. Something happened there that changed him. As I understand the story he was riding in the back of a truck with a bunch of GI's in convoy and they picked up a local kid. Just an ordinary boy. I can only imagine what it must have been like in the back of that truck - GI's chatting, maybe some were joking with the kid, some were having a smoke as they rode along when the kid pulled out a grenade. I've only heard Mom and Dad talk a little about the incident, but he took the life of that boy. That event changed him when he returned home.

That changed my Uncle and when he came back from Nam with some medals for bravery he was different. He got married and moved to Star Lake in upstate NY. He was pretty rough around the edges, but he had a big heart for kids, especially kids that seemed to end up in trouble. In a lot of ways they reminded him of himself, wandering without a mentor or male figure. He himself had little male role model to help shape him while growing up and that's what these boys needed.

Someone has said that idle hands are the devils workshop. So Uncle Mike put in a garden and kids who tended to get into mischief found a friend in my Uncle. They would spend hours talking and hoeing. He mentored a lot of boys over the years. He had a heart to help the needy. He didn't go to church much, but one day he needed to stop by the pastor's house for something. He climbed up the steps onto the porch and as he was about to knock he overheard the pastor and his wife talking about some bills that they just weren't going to be able to pay. When the conversation ended he knocked on the door and when the pastor came my Uncle signed over his pay check and said he just felt compelled to give it to them. Whatever it was could wait. This was more important.

On another occasion a GI was passing through town and his car broke down. He inquired about where to get it fixed. Someone told him to go see Mike Waters, he'll take care of you. It was closing time at the garage, but he got the car in, took the GI home fed him dinner, kept him over night, bought the parts and fixed his car to get him on his way. When the GI asked what he owed my Uncle said nothing.

It was a number of years ago that he died and at the funeral there was a waiting line to pay respects and it was a couple blocks long. People from several towns over came because of his good name, his reputation.

What kind of name do you have? If your name mentioned, what is the reputation and the character associated with that name? In just a matter of minutes one bad decision can alter how people see your name.

Not that I listen to Country music but I do know the name Randy Travis. You probably do too. We associate his name as one of the best country music stars. He has a certain persona about him. So I was really shocked a couple weeks ago when I read a

story in the news that he was arrested for a DWI and felony retaliation charges threatening to kill the officer. And apparently that's not the first time he's had a run in with the law. His name has been marred.

The choices you make determine the name you will be known by.

II. A GOOD NAME IS A MATTER OF CHARACTER

How do you get a good name? It doesn't come easily. A good name comes through the character you portray. They are the godly traits you exhibit in life. A name establishes who you are. When people hear your name they automatically conclude whether your character is good or bad. Your name is established by what you do. Your name brings rewards or consequences.

Proverbs 12:2-3

Throughout Proverbs we are given choices to make. If we follow the path of the wise, we will have a good name. If we follow the path of the fool, we will have a bad name. There are only two choices and they are ours to make. Notice some of the names of the wise used in Proverbs that depict his or her character. They are called righteous, upright, blameless, a man of understanding, trustworthy, kind, generous, prudent, and truthful. A good name follows the person with these kinds of characteristics. On the other hand the unwise are known as wicked, fool, slothful, untrustworthy, lazy, greedy, cruel. Character comes down to choices.

A good name is important because it establishes who you are; it makes you stable or firm. It comes from the character you portray. The passage refers to the righteous as being firmly rooted. Now we all know what roots are, they are the part of the plant that that is below ground that holds the plant in position, draws water and nourishment from the soil, and stores food.

Think of your good name as the Redwood forest and all the character traits of the righteous person found in Scripture as the individual trees. I read recently that what makes the Sequoia tree so unique and strong isn't their individual size which is massive. The strength that keeps them stable in violent storms is their root system. Not only does it go down deep to give it stability but the roots intertwine with the roots of the neighboring trees making it virtually impossible to topple over or uproot.

One godly character trait alone may not be enough to maintain a good name, but when each godly character trait is woven with the others, your good name will last through the spiritual storms you encounter. The passage says that the good man obtains favor from the Lord.

Something else you need to understand about a good name. It is something that others create not you.

Proverbs 27:2 "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips."

Proverbs 27:21 "The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives."

Just as the purity of silver and gold comes through the refiner's fire, so the character of a man is seen through the trials he encounters. They are what reveal character, character that is seen by others.

Oswald Chambers writes this poignant reminder about our character. "Crises reveal character. When we are put to the test the hidden resources of our character are revealed exactly."

Who we are on the inside will come out during tests. Character is not built during difficulties; it was already there to begin with.

The character of Joseph is seen multiple times in how he responded in times of testing.

In the house of Potiphar.

Behind the bars of a jail cell.

On the throne of Egypt seated before his brothers.

The character of Daniel is seen during his tests. As a teenager would his character stand against the temptations of a new and ruthless leader?

His character did not compromise his convictions.

It was his character that brought him through a scandalous report when he defied the King's law that prayers should be offered only to him.

Think of Paul before and after he was saved.

Every morning we wake up and crawl out of bed we make the choice about the kind of name we will have. That name comes from character.

When we drive down the road we make a choice about the kind of name we want to be known by.

When we interact with other people at work or at the grocery store or at school we make a choice about the kind of name we want to be known by.

When we take a test or work on a project for our boss we make a choice about the kind of name we want to be known by. Your name comes from your character

Who we are in the dark will be revealed in the light. When some life experience comes along how we have lived in the dark will come out in the light. A crisis never makes character, it always reveals it.

When you choose to have a good name, it is noticed.

It is noticed by God and by others.

Proverbs 3:3-4 "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man."

Honor is associated with good character.

Matthew 5:16 “Let you light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Proverbs 10:7 “The memory of the righteous will be a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot.”

What kind of name do you want? What kind of character do you have? It's a choice you make every day.

Character is a distinctive mark or trait; a quality or attribute; a behavior that is found in a person. Character was a word that was originally associated with an engravers tool. An impression was left on the metal or wood that was being worked on. Your character leaves an impression with others. What kind of mark you make is up to you.

Chambers says character is what a person is in what he does. He goes on to say that “we are only what we are in the dark; all the rest is reputation...It is the way we have grown to act...Reputation is what other people think of you; character is what you are in the dark, where no one sees but yourself.”

Here are some things that help develop character that is godly so that you *obtain and maintain* a good name. Character is really a matter of the heart.

A. Integrity

Integrity is defined as the quality or state of sound moral principle, uprightness and sincerity. It comes from an old word that means “*wholeness or perfect condition.*” When we describe something as being integrated, we mean that it's all together, not a bunch of separate pieces. In math, an “integer” is a number that isn't broken into pieces. Integrity then is a person whose life isn't separated into pieces. The person with integrity is someone who acts based on a core set of values.

John Maxwell says integrity is “deciding to integrate my heart's value into my daily actions.” Remember Jesus said that what is in a person's heart will come out in their actions.

The Bible will use the word blameless or above reproach for integrity. We are not talking about being sinless here, but rather having a character where no one can point a finger to accuse or charge you with anything.

According to I Timothy 2, that is the character of a person aspiring to be a Deacon.

Job is described by God as being “**blameless and upright a man who fears God and shuns evil.**”

Integrity isn't just having a moral code, it's practicing it.

1. Integrity does not compromise

Compromise is a Latin word that means a mutual promise – both sides agree to something an arbiter has put forward when the two sides can't agree on something. In essence both agree to give up something to come to a settlement. It is an adjustment to apposing principles.

For the individual, compromise of values happens gradually over time. A little indiscretion here, a little lie there and pretty soon it becomes a way of life and you're really off track morally and spiritually. When you begin to compromise, your integrity and character erode.

Someone has said that “sin always takes you farther than you intend to go and keeps you longer than you intend to stay.” Most people don't jump right into a compromising situation it happens one step at a time.

Satan wants you to believe that just this once won't be so bad, no one will know. But it's like eating a Lays potato chip – no one can eat just one.

2. Integrity is not hypocritical

An old Chinese proverb says “it is difficult to have each foot in a separate boat.”

Sir Francis Bacon once wrote, “A bad man is worse when he pretends to be a saint.”

Hypocrisy comes from the Greek theater and referred to actors playing a part. Actors would play several parts using masks to portray each character. That’s hypocrisy, being or acting in a way different than who you are.

I like what an old farmer once said: “Be who ya is, cuz if ya is who ya ain’t then ya ain’t who ya is.”

Peter Drucker who has written a fair amount on leadership principles tells leaders that when it comes to integrity to take what he calls the “mirror test.” Look in the mirror and make sure the person you see in the mirror is the kind of person you want to be. In other words, who you are in private is who you are in public. Don’t put on an act in public.

To have integrity, we must live a consistent life of following God’s principles for Christian living.

Is our life marked by integrity?

B. Honesty

Honesty is to be credible or respectable. There is no deceit. The person does not lie, cheat or steal. He is both truthful and trustworthy.

Proverbs 12:20 “There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but joy for those who promote peace.”

Proverbs 13:5 “The righteous hate what is false, but the wicked bring shame and disgrace.”

According to Proverbs a person who is deceitful is a fool and ruins his reputation. A person who is truthful in all his dealings will have a good name.

A housewife went into a local food store and asked the butcher for a chicken weighing four pounds. The butcher had only one chicken left and it weighed three pounds. The woman said she was sorry but that wasn’t enough and would have to go to another store. The butcher didn’t want to lose a customer so he stopped her as she was leaving and said he just remembered that he had another chicken in the freezer and asked her to wait while he fetched it. He took the three pound chicken into the freezer, waited a few minutes and then returned with the chicken. He placed it on the scale and unseen by the customer slightly depressed it with his finger so that it indicated four pounds. Looking at the customer he asked if she would take that one. The customer thought for a moment and then indicated that the butcher had been so kind she decided she would take both chickens.

Honesty is part of a good name.

Proverbs 11:1 which you studied today in Sunday school says **“The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are His delight.”**

This verse tells me two things. The first is that we need to be honest in business and second that the verse speaks about the Lord being delighted with accurate scales puts business in a spiritual realm.

Ancient weights were stones carved into shapes like turtles, ducks, and lions. Their shape made them easy to recognize and often had the weight inscribed on the stone. Dishonest merchants would use two sets of stones. A lighter set was used when selling merchandise so that a lesser quantity was sold to the buyer for the stated price. A heavier set was used when buying so that the merchant could buy more for the stated price. The Old Testament law was clear that dishonest scales were an abomination to the Lord. It’s lying and God hates it.

A person who is honest in business is a person of integrity. They are marks of character.

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III. A GOOD NAME IS A MATTER OF CONDUCT

What we are talking about here is nothing short of godly living. Paul had this admonition for the believers in Ephesus and it's been passed on for centuries down to us, to our children, their children and their children until Christ returns. It's real simple. It's found in **Ephesians 4:17-5:1**. I'm going to boil it all down and condense it to two main thoughts. One is negative and the other is positive.

4:17 – “Live no longer as the ungodly.”

5:1 – “Follow God's example in everything you do.”

In between those verses Paul describes the actions and attitudes of the ungodly along with the actions and attitudes of the godly. If you want to have a good name your conduct needs to be godly in nature.

Jesus summed it up this way: Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. The person with a good name practices both.

If we believe what **II Corinthians 5:17** says that when we become a Christian we become a new creation then what Paul says to the Ephesians is true, to have a good name, a good reputation we will no longer live like the old self, the self that lived in sin and the character traits mentioned in **Ephesians 4:18** and following will be absent. I don't need to go over the list again of godly traits and ungodly traits. We have heard them. **The question is which will we practice?** It's a matter of choice. **What conduct will we choose?**

Would you rather be wise or wealthy? Before you answer that consider the cost that is associated with both.

What is the cost for having an ungodly character? It may be monetary or tangible things. It may cost friends. It may cost your soul eternity separated from God.

What is the cost for having a godly character?

Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” It will cost time to pursue godly character. It will cost friends. It may cost promotions or possessions.

1. If you desire a good name with godly character you will seek godly counsel. **Psalms 1:1 “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly.”** A person who wants a good name will seek advice from others who are godly, not just because they are successful.

2. If you desire a good name with godly character you will seek friends who also have godly character. **Psalms 1:1 “Blessed is the man who does...not stand in the path of sinners.”** It doesn't mean you can't have non-Christian friends, but it does mean that our closest friends should be godly Christians. They will keep you on track.

3. If you desire a good name with godly character you will get enjoyment and encouragement from God's Word. **Psalms 1:2 “But his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night.”**

Joshua 1:8 “This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it...”

God's Word will help you withstand the storms of life so that you retain a good name. **“Psalms 1:3 “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of**

water.” You will have deep roots that keep you anchored firmly.

4. If you desire a good name with a godly character you will be a fruitful person. **Psalm 1:3**
“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither.”

John 15:5 states that if we remain in Christ and He remains in us, we will bear much fruit.

On the other hand **Psalm 1** bears testimony that a person with a bad name, an ungodly person will be like chaff that is blown away. **Proverbs 10:7** says the name of the wicked will rot.

If you want a good name that will be honored by God and others your character will be revealed through your godly conduct.

The great preacher H.A. Ironside said “No name is more lasting and enduring than that won by him who lives for God.” Every day character, a good name, is a matter of choice. **How will you choose today?**