

Reputation Matters

People will reward and relate to you based on your reputation. Think of how you choose to work in certain companies or deal with specific people because of their reputation. Sadly, something has crept into Christians where we have emphasised so much how other's opinions don't matter, only God's. As a result we have developed a misbelief that "What other people think of me and how they see me doesn't matter." So what's the balance between how I know I am in my heart and what others see? A good way to look at it is like this: ***Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing. Abraham Lincoln.*** Many people in pride think they can do anything, and the consequences will disappear. They tell their minions, "Make it go away!" but sadly, some things won't. So, let's explore what the Bible actually says about our reputations.

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

The Greek word commonly used in the Bible for reputation is the word *Doxa* which speaks of "opinion" or "belief," in Classical Greek, but in the New Testament, it commonly denotes "honour," "glory," or "reputation." It often signifies the esteemed opinion others hold about someone or something. In Hebrew your reputation or name is translated from the word "shem" which encompasses their identity, character, and reputation. It's more than just a label; it's a representation of who they are in the eyes of others and in the broader community. *"his reputation was tarnished by allegations of bribery"*. In essence your reputation is the widespread belief that someone or something has a particular characteristic. *"his knowledge of his subject earned him a reputation as an expert"*

Prov 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.

We see from this scripture that favour and a good name are rewards. They are things that come to you as a result of love and faithfulness. It is clear that scripture values having favour with both God and man as essential to personal success. There is so much you can do when you have relational capital. This ranges from people hosting your children to mentoring them and opening doors for them and for yourself.

Who do you know who lost their good reputation? In church, business or family?

What caused them to lose their reputation? Deceit, integrity issues, moral failure, heresy, violence etc

It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it. Benjamin Franklin

The people you are reflecting on probably did a lot of good. Sadly, we tend to remember the ONE BIG BAD THING they did. That's how humans are, the bad overshadows the good.

Did they try to rebuild their reputation? How easy was it for them to bounce back?

Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

1 Sam 2:26 And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with people.

Here is the balance. We know that Jesus experienced favour with man. Yet it was Jesus who said:

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

NLT What sorrow awaits you who are praised by the crowds, for their ancestors also praised false prophets.

A good reputation is not about popularity with carnally minded people.

In some ways your reputation is also linked to your brand. **Your personal brand is to do with how you manage, maximize and optimize how you present yourself to the world.** It is to do with what is left in people's mind space after dealing with you. **You can build your brand intentionally by design or by default.** There are things that destroy our brands and there are things that build our brands. We will discuss these later. **People do business with people they like, people they have an emotional connection with and with brands they trust. You are a brand, and your brand isn't for everyone.**

I'm not sure whether Jesus had a good reputation amongst the Pharisees.

Personal reputation in organizations is the extent to which individuals are perceived by others, over time, as performing their jobs competently, and being helpful towards others in the workplace...This is performance and character over time. **The time, or the temporal component of personal reputation, simply suggests that reputations typically are not formed instantaneously** (i.e., except under unusual circumstances). Instead, **reputations are formed through the consistent demonstration of distinctive and salient behaviours on repeated occasions, or over time. Reputation relates to a person's history of behaviour.** *Robert Zinko, et al, (2012) Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (2012), 85, 156–180*

What is your history of behaviour, relationships, and usefulness at home, in Church and at work?

You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do. Henry Ford

Years ago, I preached a message entitled, "Living Beyond Good Intentions." You don't build a good reputation on just good intentions.

For what are you known by most people around you?

Recently I sent a video of my adidas shoe collection to some friends. Sipho confessed to me that when he first saw it, he thought I wanted them to pick which shoes they wanted. (Clearly Sipho has an exaggerated view of his shoe size). I reflected on this, and it felt good that he thought I wanted to give away my shoes. It means to me I have a good reputation of being generous like that.

You will build a reputation based on what you repeatedly do. Inconsistency is a big derailer of good reputations.

Repetition makes reputation and reputation makes customers. Elizabeth Arden

For what do you have a reputation? For some it is their faith, whilst for others it is their obedience, sadly many are only known for things that have no eternal value.

*Romans 1:8 – 10 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, **because your faith is being reported all over the world.** 9 God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you 10 in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.*

You can see Paul was making decisions concerning them based on what he had been told; their reputation preceded them. This also encouraged Paul to pray for them.

*Col 1:3-4 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 **because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus** and of the love you have for all God's people—*

They prayed for them based on what they had heard. Your reputation can cause people to pray for you.

The Early Church leaders examined someone's reputation before promoting them.

1 Tim 3:7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

The Early Church leaders would examine the reputation of widows before offering them support.

*1 Tim 5: 9-10 No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, 10 **and is well known for her good deeds**, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord's people, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.*

Having a good reputation will often involve a choice.

Eccle 7:1a A good name is better than fine perfume,

What's more important for you? **If having a good name is not superior to the desires of your flesh, you will compromise.**

Eccl 10:1 As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left. Even as he walks along the road, the fool lacks sense and shows everyone how stupid he is.

What do you display to those around you?

Prov 20:11 Even small children are known by their actions, so is their conduct really pure and upright?

NASB It is by his deeds that a boy distinguishes himself, if his conduct is pure and right.

People will know you by what you do. **We judge ourselves by our intentions, but others judge us by the impact of our behaviour.**

Why do people end up losing their good reputation?

1. Seeking pleasure because of their pain
 - A lot of times we have become resentful of how we have been treated, so we drop our guard.
2. Lacking social awareness
 - It's easy to forget that my behaviour will affect the reputation of others close to me.
 - How you are and what you do will affect your family and loved ones. When you are conscious of this, it helps you to behave.
3. Overconfidence

A lot of times when we are tempted, the desire is so big that we suppress the negative consequences of the sinful act. At that moment, we think we are invincible.

4. Underestimating how fickle people are

- We think they will understand
- We assume they will still follow our leadership

Think of how Jesus was praised by people shouting Hosanna and soon afterwards they wanted to crucify Him. If that happened to Jesus it will happen to us. Sometimes we can be so conceited that we think people will always be loyal to us regardless of what we do.

5. Underestimating the consequences of sin

- Credibility takes time to build and is based largely on character and competence. When this is eroded people will often vote with their feet ie they will leave you.
- This often occurs because of a hedonistic time perspective bias. This is where people just live for the moment.

6. Failing to pre-decide how we will respond to temptation

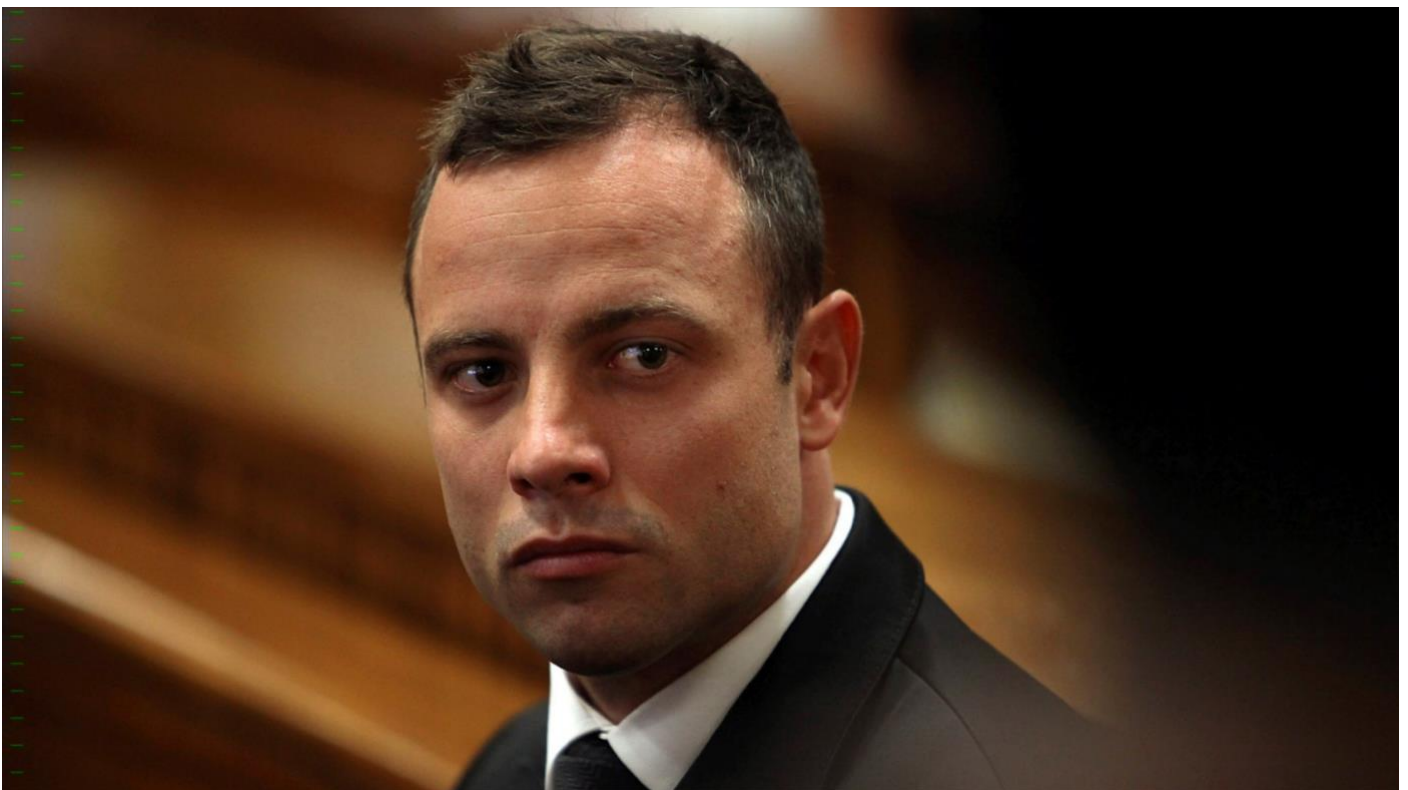
7. Failing to value the importance of a good name early in life.

8. Failing to have guardrails

This happens when you think you can never fall. Some good guardrails include:

- Accountability with regards to decision-making
- Local Church involvement
- Rules of engagement around spending and associations

What comes to mind when I show you this picture?



It's a court room picture of Oscar Pistorius. But if I showed you this medal picture 11 years ago you would have a different reaction.



This shows me that your brand or reputation can be eroded by something that just takes you a few minutes to do.

It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently. Warren Buffett

What are some common mistakes we make when attempting to keep a good reputation?

1. Impression management
 - The show must go on.
 - As long as we can save face then its okay.
 - Its great to have favour with man as long as you also have favour with God. **A lot of people are trying to be popular with man, but the problem is that heaven isn't applauding.**
2. Trying too hard
 - We can't control how other's see us.
If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of me. Dwight L. Moody
 - Boasting in desperation is distasteful. It is better to have others speak well of you.
Prov 27:2 Let someone else praise you, and not your own mouth; an outsider, and not your own lips.
3. Not taking accountability when we mess up.

Rather be like the level 5 leaders who take accountability when they fail and are self-effacing, giving credit to the team, when they succeed. I think of situations where leaders have fallen in ministries, but things are swept under the carpet or people are just relocated and it is seen as a promotion.
4. Self-centredness and self-absorption

Whilst managing your reputation always stay focused on the mission not on your polls or ratings. It is easy to become more conscious of this and somewhat obsessed by the polls instead of focusing on why you are here.

Did you ever stop to think that a great man in life who has won great acclaim and great reputation is the very man who is willing to share and give the honor to others in the doing of things that made him great? Charles M. Schwab

What are some potential reputation destroyers in your life?

What are your ticking time bombs? These are character flaws or proclivities, that you have not yet dealt with, but time is ticking. If you don't deal with them today, one day there will be an explosion when you are influencing many people. The higher up you go, the more people that will be affected.

The issues in your life that you don't judge internally today, will end up being exposed externally and judged by the world tomorrow.