

# The Christian's Reputation and Being Blameless

We may feel we are living an upright, godly life. However, it may be beneficial to examine our lives to try to understand what impression we may be making on others in our community. Our appearance or lifestyle may be giving off signals we do not realize we are sending.

What should be the Christian's reputation in the community? Is the Christian's reputation formed by conscious effort or as result of his life?

Proverbs 22:1 A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Psalms 15 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Philippians 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

What are we known for in our communities? Sometimes a person from the surrounding community will ask if nonmembers can attend our services. Do they see us as a closed or segregated people? It usually says on our church signs that everyone is welcome. Is that enough of an invitation? How can we make someone feel a warm invitation?

If we are too proud of our reputation, this can have a far-reaching negative impact. A parent may feel their child must keep a certain standard of outward appearance or attitude that may actually help sow seeds of self-righteousness or deception—or rebellion. What are some ways parents may do this to their children? How can we judge if we have an unhealthy view of how we and our children appear to others? Is there a healthy amount of reputational pride that motivates us to make our appearance and life appealing to others, or is all pride negative?

Can we be blameless in all areas of our life? Think of our affluence and how that looks to the world to drive on the church yard and see numerous late-model, expensive vehicles. It sometimes seems we feed off each other within the church to influence our purchases or design preferences. It is not unusual, however, for our tastes to be seen as rich or even

flashy by our neighbors. How important is it for us to be in tune with the criticisms or concerns of the community when it comes to the cars we drive or our homes and furnishings? What part, if any, should the ideas and thoughts of the surrounding community play in how we dress and behave in public or even at home?

When outside children come to Bible school, they may be made to feel they do not fit in. Sometimes we find that in teaching our children about worldliness, we have inadvertently made them feel repulsed or frightened about interacting with “worldly” people. What part do we as parents and leaders play in this? Are we blameless? How can we teach our children to be inviting and friendly and yet caution them against the dangers of the world?

Are we blameless in our claim to be a plain people? How are we doing with our style of dress as it relates to being a plain people of God? Where is the line between acceptable fashion trends and unacceptable ones? Is it modesty? Neatness?

Are we blameless in our financial dealings? Do our tax preparers or bankers see it that way? Or do they see us as a people who seek out any loopholes they can find even if it means stretching the truth a bit? Is it fair to say that we should go to any lengths to avoid paying any more taxes than necessary? What witness should we leave with those we deal with financially? How many of our customers or accountants would feel a warm invitation to attend church with confidence that we are pilgrims and strangers here on earth?

If we were to come into a time of opposition such as our great-grandfathers endured, would our reputation be quite different because we would not be going to war or buying war bonds, as was the situation in their times? How much will being blameless in other areas of life influence whether we are considered nonresistant? What is the relationship between our financial philosophy and practice and nonresistance? How do we stay blameless when it comes to politics?

Are we upholding our beliefs and practices in the time before marriage and thus living in a blameless way and above reproach in this area? We have always held that marriage partners are found by God's leading and not by dating or courtship; and after a couple is engaged, they should be careful to be generally in the presence of family and friends. In recent times it seems some prospective marriage partners display a more relaxed attitude about spending time alone (driving together, etc.) as compared to former years. How do we stay blameless in this? Should the announcement of an engagement be a surprise to the congregation?