

Proverbs 22:1

Sunday 11/12/2017

I am not too sure of many things in life, but I am very confident that wherever you go, Vicki, God will use and bless you. You have always had a great heart toward the things of the Word of God, so we appreciate that.

Today, we are going to begin our study in the Book of Proverbs Chapter 22. We finished Chapter 21 last week. As is typical for chapters in the Book of Proverbs, we will unearth a wealth of material. This will be a great chapter that is loaded with biblical, life-changing, and life-preserving principles in the Word of God.

I want you to know this so you can get prepared: it will probably be two or three weeks. Within this chapter lies the key verse to parenting, raising up your children, and bringing them up in the world that we live in today. In three or four weeks, when we hit this verse, we are going to camp on it. We are probably going to take four or five weeks, and we are going to exhaust every aspect of that great verse and try to help you.

I know many of you are becoming new parents, and that is an exciting time. You are having children, you are having babies, and if another person ever got saved and joined our church, in ten years, we will be running ten thousand just because of all the kids you are having. But those kids are going to grow up, and there are some things that need to be done before they get to that point.

When we started our church, my grandkids, Steve and Nicky's kids, and many of your kids were just little guys. Now they are in high school, some of them have graduated, some of them are in junior high, some of them are moving into junior and senior in high school, and they are facing the most challenging time in their life. My job is to not only help you with all your personal struggles, but to help get you prepared to deal with your children.

The Bible talks about, and we will get into this in great detail in a couple of weeks, that in every child's life, when they hit that age, the Evil Day shows up. That Evil Day is the day that they have to face alone the onslaught of the world, the flesh, and the devil. What you have built into them will be the key to whether they make it or they do not. My job will be to help you through all of this with the Word of God and good, solid biblical principles.

The Evil Day for many of our kids has now arrived, and their lives, their souls, are hanging in the balance. It will not be what our Sunday school teachers do, it will not be what Zach does, it will not be what anybody does in whatever groups they are in. The real fundamental factor will be what you, the parent, do. I am going to be very honest with you, some of you are losing that battle. Some of you are losing that battle, and I want to help try to turn that around. We will see what happens when we get into it, but that will be coming up in a couple of weeks.

Before we get into that, we need to look at our first set of verses here. Let us begin by reading Proverbs Chapter 22. I am afraid we are only going to get through one verse today, but I am trying to hurry along as quickly as I can. I know some of you are so bored with Proverbs. We just need to rush through the mind of God and get on with the football game. The Chiefs play today,

by the way. They do not? Why not? What happened? They have a bye. Somebody bought them? I have no idea. The Chiefs are not playing. I wonder what happened. I did not hear anything on it.

Proverbs 22:1

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

This is a great verse with many important and valuable things that we need to look at today. I want to start off by putting it into a context in your Bible.

I. The Good Name of Israel

As we find it in the book of Proverbs, and we find it here from a doctrinal standpoint, this "name" here will be the nation of Israel. This is what he is talking about, in particular, in the context.

We know that in Genesis 32:28, Jacob, whose name means "schemer" or "planner," is where God changes his name to Israel. The word Israel means, in English, "who has a preference with God." This is a great place in the Bible; in fact, it is the first time in your Bible where the name Israel shows up.

We see God changing his name, and we know that from Jacob, as we move on through here, we have talked about how in Genesis you find the formulation of the nation of Israel, where God begins that five-step process to bring them where He wants them to be, which the Old Testament is really divided up around. We find here that God changes his name to Israel, and from Israel, Jacob, now come the twelve tribes, and from the twelve tribes comes the nation as we know it, the nation of Israel.

Most people do not know this: we talk about the Jews. We call them Jews or Jewish, but they are never called Jews until 2 Kings 16:6, after the kingdom split north and south. Nobody really understands where the word Jew comes from. It was a term that was used for the two southern tribes, which were Judah and Israel. Most people think that it has something to do with Judah and the two southern tribes, and that is probably true. We get the idea that when we talk about the Jews, we hear about the Jews, the Jewish faith, and all that, and we think that they were called that all the way through. That is not true. It was not until after Solomon lost the kingdom and Jeroboam and Rehoboam split the kingdom that you find the word Jew even showing up in your Bible. Before that time, they were not called that.

We talk about Hebrews. In Genesis 14:13, Abraham is called the first Hebrew. Of course, we see that in connection with the formulation of the nation of Israel and God getting ready to call them out. So, by the time you get to Genesis with Jacob here, in chapter 32, you find the first time it is called Israel. Israel will have preference with God; there is no question about that.

Right now, as we saw last week and talked about, the nation of Israel is under the pressure of the world system of a false witness. They are blamed for everything. Thursday night, somebody

asked a question about the nation of Israel, and I walked you through a brief history of them and showed you how everything falls into place. But today, the nation of Israel is a byword. A byword is not a good word, by the way.

But there is coming a day when the name Israel, God's people, will be a good name. This is the reference that he is talking about in the book of Proverbs here. It will be a time when that name will be the focal point of everything on earth. You will find this in your Bible if you want a collection of books or chapters to look at. Look at Ezekiel 40-48. These are eight great chapters on God reforming and restructuring and giving the nation of Israel that new covenant that he talks about in the book of Hebrews.

The Bible told us in Genesis 12:3 that God told Abraham that when Israel became a nation, all the families of the earth were going to be blessed through that nation. A little bit later on, in Genesis 18:18, God told him that all the nations of the earth are going to be blessed through the nation of Israel. When you get into the New Testament, in your time and my time, the Bible says in John 4:22 that our salvation, salvation, is of the Jews. Everything runs through the nation of Israel one way or the other.

So, the name that God gave Jacob, or changed his name to, was Israel, a preference with God. It will be a good name because of God's blessing that is going to flow through the nation of Israel. When Christ comes back at the Second Coming, establishes a nation of Israel, establishes people, a nation of Israel, everything is going to flow through them.

It is kind of like the church right now. We are in the kingdom of God. We know that is a spiritual kingdom. We know from Ephesians 1 that all spiritual blessings flow to us through Christ. He put it all in Christ. But in the millennium, that is not true. In the millennium, which is the physical kingdom of heaven, Genesis 18 and Genesis 12 come into play now, and all the blessings that God has for all the families, all the nations on this earth, are going to run through the nation of Israel. Today, we want to look at this good name and lay it out through the Bible. I think it is an interesting thing to look at and to study.

II. The Good Name of Jesus Christ

Now, the context is the nation of Israel. I get that. But along with that, there will be the greatest name in the history of the planet that is a good name, and that will be the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, or Jesus. That is a good name.

No other name on earth, down through history, has caught more controversy than that name. That name is a polarizing name. Some people's names that you hear in the world scheme of politics or life in general are polarizing by who they are. When I talk about Donald Trump, people go to two different corners. When I talk about Hillary Clinton, people go to two different corners. When people talk about Barack Obama or Ronald Reagan or Jimmy Carter, people get polarized. Some people like them, some people do not like them. There has never been a name that has been more polarizing, without a doubt, than the name of Jesus. People will love that name, and then people will hate that name. People will use it in connection with the great blessings of life and all the

things that God has given them, or they will use it as a cuss word to apply weight to what they want to say.

The Bible says it is a good name. The book of Psalms means praise. The book of Psalms is filled with references to the name of God and the praising that goes along with it.

Psalms 7:17

I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

If you do a quick study through the Old Testament, you will find that there are fourteen names associated with God in the Old Testament. When you look at the Lord Jesus, you will find that there are seven names ascribed to Him.

- Deuteronomy 32 calls Him the Rock.
- Genesis 3 calls Him the Seed.
- Genesis 49 calls Him the Sceptre.
- Numbers 24 calls Him the Star.
- Genesis 49 calls Him a Shepherd.
- Genesis 49 calls Him a Stone.
- Genesis 49 calls Him Shiloh.

You will find that those are names that are given to Him, and every one of them is a good name. They all fit into His character.

Psalms 8:1

O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Psalms 76:1

In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel.

In fact, when you go through the book of Psalms, ninety-seven times you will find a reference to the goodness and the greatness of the name of Jesus.

In the New Testament, Acts 4:12 says:

Acts 4:12

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

That is a good name.

Philippians 2:9-11 says:

Philippians 2:9-11

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

That is some name He has. The Bible says that He has exalted that name above every other name. That is incredible.

I will just throw this in here: you go back into Psalms, and in a couple of pages of the Old Testament, it exalts the name of the Lord above every other name. But you know what else He says? He takes the Word of God that you have in your hand, the King James Bible, and He exalts that book above the very name of His Son. Not only is that some name He has, that is some book you have.

Revelation 19:13

And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

The devil hates that name, and we are going to connect all the dots here for a second. The devil hates that name. He hates the book that you hold in your hand for one express purpose: because of the name that it represents.

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:14

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

That is a good name. You see, the devil wants his own book. He wants his own Bible that will exalt his name and take Christ out, and that is what the new Bibles do.

A key verse all through our study in the last couple of weeks has been John 8:44:

John 8:44

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

So the devil takes his people, unsaved people, and takes the most highly precious, God-honoring name in God's universe, and he makes it, through his people, because he hates that name. He makes it a cuss word. He associates it with hell. He associates it with damnation. He associates it

with every filthy thing in this world. He takes the highest name, which is above every name, which is a good name, and wants his people, and unfortunately sometimes a lot of God's people, to drag it through the mud of this world.

When an unsaved man, or a Christian, I guess, wants to add weight and authority to what he is saying, he will throw in the most powerful name in all the universe to make his point. He will go around with the authority of asking God to damn this. He will go around with authority taking Jesus Christ as some powerful statement that he is about to make about something that has nothing to do with the Bible. He will walk around and say, "I will be damned." You will ask him a question, and he will say, "Hell yes."

You know what is interesting in the Bible? God judges people out of the things that they say in their mouth in the Word of God. Imagine at the Great White Throne Judgment when an unsaved man stands up there and wants to make his defense. How many times do you think in the life of an unsaved man did he ask God to damn something? How many times do you think he said, "Hell no"? How many times do you think he said, "I will be damned"?

What if, at the Great White Throne Judgment, every unsaved man and every unsaved woman who their whole life used those words and brought it down to a godless, sinful level stood there before God, and every time he or she opens their mouth in their defense, he hears it, she hears it played back: "I will be damned. I will be damned." If the angels of heaven should say, "Should you go to heaven?" you will hear it come out a thousand times: "Hell no." You better watch what you say.

The Bible is very clear that God judges people out of the things that they say, and at the judgment seat of Christ for you and for me, it clearly tells you in the questions He is going to ask about the words we speak. I am telling you, what we do so frivolously, what we take so candidly, what we do when we think we are really a big tough guy or a gal, taking the highest name the world has ever seen and dragging it through the mud, it may just not work out for you in the end the way you think it will.

If I did not know that the Bible was true, if I did not know that God was real and Christianity is everything the Bible says it was, I would know it by the name Jesus and God and how the devil wants to take that high name and turn it into a cuss word. I know it because nobody ever cusses in Buddha's name. I know it because nobody ever cusses in Muhammad's name. I know it because nobody ever cusses in Confucius' name or Buddha's name. The Jehovah's Witnesses, their spiritual leader and founder was Judge Rutherford. Nobody gets a good cussing out in Rutherford. The crazy Church of Christ people, their founder, their faith was Alexander Campbell. Nobody. A lot of people cuss out Alexander, but they do not cuss out Alexander Campbell. Why, in an unsaved man's world, every other word out of his filthy mouth will be and have to be derogatory toward God's Son? Why is that? I will tell you why: because that name is a good name. I will tell you why: because there is no other name given among men under heaven whereby we must be saved, and the devil hates that name.

You have in your chair this morning, either in your lap or on the floor in front of you, a little red book called a hymnal, Great Hymns of the Faith. In that book, there are five hundred songs about

one man, the Lord Jesus Christ. We could go down to the Christian bookstore, and you could get twenty more hymnals that have five hundred songs all about one guy. You know what? You do not find one hymn book about Muhammad. There was not one song written about him. You do not find any hymn book with a bunch of songs about Buddha. You do not find any hymn book with a bunch of songs about Confucius or Moroni, the angel that gave the golden tablets, or Joseph Smith, or John Calvin, or Alexander Campbell. There is only one name that changed men's lives, that polarized them in such a way that inspired them in their hearts that they wanted to write and sing in their heart about one man. That is a good name.

Only one name under heaven given among men. In Acts 2:38, when they were getting right from crucifying Christ, they had to get baptized in the name of Jesus. It is a good name.

The Bible says:

Proverbs 22:1

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

III. The Good Name of the Christian

Any good name that you and I would have will be based on the name of Jesus Christ that we took upon us as a Christian. The name Christian means "little Christ." The name Christian is first found in your Bible in Acts 11, where they were first called Christians at Antioch.

The word Christian was given to us by our enemies. It was given to us by our enemies because the Roman Empire was the world power at that time, and if anybody knows a little bit about the Roman Empire, you know they had a god for everything. A little bit later on, they had a god for everybody. They had five hundred gods. When they looked at Christianity, they saw a religion that only had one God. To them, they followed the same mindset that many of God's people do today: bigger is better. The more gods you have, the better you are.

I remember one time in a tough situation, our sergeant said, "If anybody wants to pray, now is a good time to pray." He said, "I myself am going to pray to Jesus Christ, I am going to pray to Buddha, I am going to pray to Confucius." He said, "We need all the help we can get." You only need one. You only need one. It is an incredible thing. It is a good name. So we are called "little Christs."

There are two names that are associated with what we have and what we are and what we believe. That is why we will never change. We will never not call ourselves Christians because our enemies called us Christians. I am proud to be a little Christ. I am not anywhere near what I should be, but you ought to be proud to have Christ living inside you and not five hundred gods. Imagine the complexity and the confusion of that. You have a god for every month, you have a god for every day of the week, you have a god for every event you do, you have a god for your dog, you have a god for your children, you have a god for that. It gets real confusing. I just like simple: one. If you have a religion that has five hundred gods or five hundred people going to try

to help you, it does not say much about the one God who is supposed to be in charge. You know what I have? I have one God. He covers all the bases. I do not need anything else.

They also called us Baptists. You will find a lot of churches that were once Baptist churches, but were never really Baptist churches, that want to take "Baptist" off their name now. They think that "Baptist" has a bad connotation, and I am not saying that it does not. But whatever you change your name to is going to have a bad connotation to somebody. If you say, "I am nothing," that has a bad connotation. If you say, "I am something," that is going to have a bad connotation. In other words, we will never take "Baptist" off our name. You know why? For the same reason we will never not call ourselves Christian. The name Baptist was given to us by our enemies because we stood for a doctrine in the Bible that they did not believe. We would not believe that infant baptism would save anybody, so we got labeled Anabaptist, "against child baptism." It stuck. I am not taking that off. If some Christian gave us that name or something, then I might consider changing it. But when my enemy recognizes the single greatest doctrine that we stand for, which is the blood of Christ washing your sins away, I am keeping it. That is a good name.

When you got saved, you took His name. The Bible says there is no other name among men whereby we must be saved. When we got saved, we took His name.

Now, let me ask you a question. In Exodus 20, you have the Ten Commandments. All Christians today think that meant the Ten Suggestions. It was the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 20:7, you find the third commandment:

Exodus 20:7

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

I have always heard that that is talking about somebody cussing. I grew up in churches that said you should not cuss and take the Lord's name in vain. I want to tell you something: that is not what it is talking about. I agree that you should not do that, but that is not what the verse is saying. The verse was not saying to Israel, "Do not cuss and take God's name in vain."

If you have taken the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by your salvation, and you have come to the place where you have accepted with understanding that you are to serve Him and you are to be a living sacrifice to Him, if you have taken His name and done absolutely nothing with it, you have taken His name in vain. Israel did. Israel got their name changed in Genesis 32. They took His name, and His people went and did absolutely zero with it. God gave everything that God gave them to the world.

Now, by salvation, we get His image. By salvation, we get His name. By salvation, we got His Spirit. By salvation, we got His body. By salvation, we got His mind. Ninety-nine percent of God's people took all of that and took it in vain and do absolutely nothing with it all of their Christian life.

Let me ask you the question: you have taken His name. Have you taken it in vain? Let me ask you another question. This is question Sunday morning. What do people see when they look at

you? What do they see when they look at me? Do they see Christ, or do they see the world? At work, when people hear your name or see you, what do they think about your name? What image pops up? When people say your name, an image pops up. My question to you is this: is it for Christ, or is it for the world? What do they think when your name pops up? Christ or something else? With what name do they associate you? Christ or the world?

The Bible says a good name is better than great riches, and a good name is rather to be chosen. You do understand that you get to choose how people look at you. When you came out of the factory, it was not pre-programmed to what you were going to be. When you got saved, the Bible says that God made you a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away, all things become new. How come that did not happen? Why did that not take effect? I do not have the answer to that, but I sure know there are a lot of God's people who claim they got saved and nothing ever changed. They do not love the Bible anymore after they suppose they get saved than before they do. They go to church when it is convenient. When there is not a ball game, there is not this or that, there is not something their kids have to do, there is not some dance class, there is not this. Everything else will take precedence.

If God's Son let all the things in His life take precedence over Him dying on the cross, we never would have gotten saved. "Oh, I am going to the cross, but John is in a soccer game this afternoon, I am going to go." "Oh, I want to go to the cross this morning because Bob Alexander needs a Savior, but Peter is fishing down there, and they are really biting, and I am going to go down there for a while." We let so many things distract us. The very focus and the very passion that we should have should go back to the greatest name that ever filled the earth. "Tell me the story of Jesus, write on my heart every word. Tell me the story most precious, no sweeter words to my ears. Jesus." That is a good name. That is a good name.

You do realize you get to choose. Nobody makes you get drunk. No one makes you party with the guys at work, after work, probably during work. Nobody makes us do the things that destroy our character and reputation that people look at us and know we are a Christian. It is not the devil that keeps people from getting saved; it is people like me and you. It is people that took the name and took it in vain. Proverbs 22 is pretty hot out of the gate, is it not? We are not done yet. If you say, "I do not like it," you are going to like it less before I get through. I have news for you.

Life is about choices, is it not? It is about the choices we make. We get to choose what to do with God's name after we take it. It is not the fact that once you get saved, God comes down and puts a double-arm hammerlock on you and makes you do what is right. God thought for sure that once you understand the unbounded love that He had for you, you would just give up the world.

IV. Good Names in the Bible

There are a lot of good names in the Bible. They all gave us really good examples. I think of Mark 14:8-9, and it is also in John 11. You have the story of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Mary has a good name. There is a great contrast in that story between Mary and Martha. Martha represents two kinds of Christians. Martha is always busy doing something, but she has no relationship with the Lord. Martha is always trying to change God's mind. She is always trying to

change what God is going to do. She is always interrupting and saying, "Lord, you really did not mean that." One time the Lord said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are so busy and in so many things in your life." You always find Martha doing things where you always find Mary sitting at His feet.

There came a time in that great story that Mary took an alabaster box that had ointment in it. The Bible says it was very costly. She could have sold that. In fact, I read in a commentary years ago, I do not know if it is true or not, but it makes a good point, that the cost of that box of alabaster ointment was probably worth a whole year's wages. She took that, and she could have sold it, she could have done it, but she wanted to give it to the most precious thing in her life. She does three things. I have a sermon on this, and I will not preach it to you this morning, but I will give you a little bit to understand it. She does three things:

1. The first thing she does is she takes that alabaster box, breaks open that ointment, and anoints His feet. It may seem like a strange thing, but the next thing she does is she has to have something to wipe the oil in, so she uses her own hair. She obviously had long hair, like many of you ladies do today, and she wiped His feet with her hair. The Bible says that when she opened that and put it on and got it all over her, it had a beautiful smell to it. The Bible says that the ointment filled the whole room.

I have looked at that and thought to myself, I understand why she has a good name. Thousands of sermons have been preached on her. I have probably preached on it over a hundred times in my time. When I looked at that, I thought there are three aspects to her good name, and it is all around what she did that represents ministry.

- 1.) Sacrifice Godward

You see, the first thing she did was anoint His feet with the oil. That is a picture of what you and I do to God, Godward. If you do not have a relationship with God first, between you and Him, Godward, nothing is ever going to work in your life. She had this ointment, and she put it on His feet. When she put it on His feet, that represents to us her sacrifice that she made Godward.

- 2.) Submission Inward

Then the second thing the Bible says is that she used her own hair to wipe His feet. In 1 Corinthians 11, we know that hair, a woman's hair, is a picture of her submission. So the second thing that she did is she used her own hair. In other words, Godward just was not enough for her. She got involved, and what was Godward now became inward. She became part of the Lord Jesus Christ in everything that He was.

- 3.) Influence Outward

Then the Bible says that once she anointed His feet, it went Godward. Once she used her hair, and it went inward, then the ointment filled the house, and it went outward. Everybody smelled it. Everybody benefited from that one selfless act. Somebody said that it cost her a year's wages. I thought about that a lot. We talk about sacrifice. That is a sacrifice. No wonder she has a good name. She spent what cost her a year of her life to make Him smell good for just a moment of time. And we will not walk across the street to do it. That is a good name. That is a good name.

Then in Acts 11:24, you have a guy by the name of Barnabas. He has a good name. In his name of taking care of people and doing what he was supposed to do, they called him Barnabas, "son of consolation." He consoled people. He helped people. He did with them. Some of God's people have been saved ten, fifteen, twenty years, and they have never helped anybody. There is not one person in their life that they ever reached out to with what God has given them. I am not fighting it; I am just telling you it is the truth. They have so much baggage in their life of all the problems after ten, fifteen years. You can never call them the son of consolation. You have to call them the son of Samsonite. He reached out and he touched people. He took what he had and he realized that there were people that were hurting, and he was not just selfless about his own life and what he wanted. He saw the others out there who did not have what he had.

I think of the Apostle Paul. His name is associated with the greatest Christian that ever lived. He is one of the men in the Bible that God changed his name. We will talk about those in a little bit. His name before that was Saul. Once he gets saved in Acts 9, and God starts to use him, he wins a man to Christ whose name is Sergius Paulus, in Acts 13:7-9. It looks like on that basis, just two verses down, God changes his name from Saul to Paul, based on the first person he ever won to Christ. That is an interesting study.

I think of the Apostle John. There is no greater model of any Christian in the Bible than John, one of the twelve apostles, the only one that went all the way. All the rest scattered. He stands for what your life and my life should be. When you go back in Proverbs and it talks about the strange woman, the whorish woman, in Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 7, she catches this little guy on a street corner, kind of like a hooker working downtown. She is painting up her face, and she is looking really beautiful. This little kid comes walking down the street, probably from a Future Farmers of America convention. He has his little jacket on, never been outside a corn crib in the USA. He sees her and he goes, "Golly." She smiles and blinks those eyes, and she is dressed with the attire of a harlot, the Bible says. That is a picture of the great Babylon mystery religion seducing you as a Christian into the false spiritual adultery of leaving God for another false religion.

When you live your life as the greatest Christian ever lived, and you are the model, you know what your model is in the Bible? John. Every time a hooker takes a man and destroys his life, when she says, somebody asks her, "How many dates did you have tonight?" she will say, "Oh, I only had two, what? Johns."

John is the most popular name. I do not know how many Johns we have in this church. We have John Busquets, we have John Christensen, we have Johns all over the place. We have two back here and two upstairs, one for the men, one for the women. John is the most popular name out there. It really is. But you know why? Because people name their kids John, even if they do not know it. In their minds, they want the best, and you could never have a better name as far as I am concerned.

You never noticed that there are two names nobody ever names their kids. One of them is Judas, the other one is Jezebel. I never went to a hospital when somebody just had a baby, and a little

sweet little girl was lying in that little crib, and you said, "What is her name?" "Jezebel." "What is his name?" "Judas."

I like, when I go to, I have not been down there for years and years and years, I think Pearl Gift has them, those coffee mugs that have your name on it and then tell you what it means. You pick it up, and it says "John" and it says, "lover of whatever," or "Phil," "lover of this, lover of that." I love looking at that. I like to know. I picked up mine one time, and it says "Bob, lover of truth, lover of righteousness, a defender, protector." It was a really big cup. There are good names. John was a good name.

V. The Good Name and Character

A good name is invaluable. It will always tell who and what we are, really based on what we do with the Word of God and the Lord in our lives. The Bible calls this an honest report. In Acts 6, they picked the first deacons, seven deacons. When they looked for these guys, Acts 6:1-3 says they looked for three things. It is the same three things that we find. You have a lot of wannabe deacons. You have people that think that if I could be a deacon, that is really something, and they could not make it to first base on a softball game of deacons.

The first thing that they had to have was an honest report. That is a good name. First and Second Timothy talk about the qualifications for a deacon and a pastor. Their character has to match their reputation. The second thing, they had to be full of the Holy Ghost. That means that they were led by God's Spirit. That means they had a history and a life of making good decisions. The third thing it says they had to be full of wisdom. That is the ability to use what God has given you. The Bible says that this is what he looked for. They had to have a good name. The people were not going to follow somebody that did not do what the Bible says. In the Bible, a good name implies a character that matches the reputation. Somebody said one time, "If a man's reputation ever met his character, they would know each other." Somebody said, "A good name will be gained by many good acts, and you can lose it with just one bad one."

The study of character in the Bible will be a study on self-discipline and self-control. Character. You are not born with character. You are born a character, but you are not born with character. It has to be developed. It is developed by what we focus on and what we think about. When I get into the great verses on training your children, I am going to show you how to build character in your child's life. It comes from the fact that you have to bring every thought into captivity, into the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

I have learned that if I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself.

Proverbs 22:1

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

Character is what we really are. It is what we do when nobody sees. Reputation is how people view us in light of what we do with our character when nobody sees. We either come out with a good name or a bad name. You can deceive yourself that you have a good name, but your character and your reputation will always truly define who we really are. Have you taken the name of the Lord God in vain? You took it the day you got saved. Most of God's people are like the Dirty Harry movie: we are just legends in our own mind.

In any church, you will have people with a good name and a bad name, good reputations and bad ones. Many times here in this church, people come in with issues, and they will come in and talk to me, and I will begin to try to put a plan in their life, something to help them, something to get them where they want to get to. Out of the clear blue sky, I will say, "You know what? I will put a support team around you. I have some really good guys and some really good ladies, and we will help you through this whole thing. We will do whatever it takes. I will stay involved. I will work with you, but let me put an accountability team." You know what they do? They will ask specifically for you, some of you. They will say, "Could so-and-so work with me? Could she work with me? Could he work with me?" I think there is no greater compliment in all of life in Christianity than for someone to be struggling in life and ask me if I can put them with you. They see in your life something that they do not have. They have seen your reputation. They have seen your good name.

When they want to buy a car, they go see so-and-so. When they want to get insurance, they go see so-and-so. When they want to learn how to fish, how to hunt, and how to play golf and all the things, they will go find so-and-so. When they want to decorate their house and do it right, they will find so-and-so. When they want to buy a house, they will find so-and-so. When they want a recipe for the greatest Hungarian goulash on the planet, they will find so-and-so. But when it comes to spiritual things, when it comes to things in their life that they are struggling with, they have seen your life, you have a good name, and they ask for you. I think that is incredible. I might add along with that, there are plenty that they do not ask for.

VI. The Good Name and Dependability

The single greatest asset of a good name will be one word: dependability. I am not really worried about when I put you with somebody if that person could depend on you, though I may at some point. My real worry many times is, can God depend on you? The Bible is full of examples of undependable people. Dependability is simply saying, "Do what you say you will do."

In Acts 13:13, we do not have time to go through a lot of them, but John Mark, he said, "Oh, I want to go on a mission trip with Paul and Barnabas. Oh, yeah, I want to get my missionary hat, my missionary jacket. I want to get that sign on the bus, 'World Tour of the Apostle Paul.'" And when he got in it, and he found out it was too rough, he ran home to Mama. Undependable.

I look at Lot in Genesis 12, all the way up to Genesis 19 and 20. There is not a more undependable person on this planet. People you cannot depend on for anything.

Proverbs 29:15

Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

What good is it if you have a mouthful of teeth if you cannot eat? You will never run the race with a broken leg. Dependability. That comes with a reputation of a good name. I can depend on that. It is not me. I have given things to people to do. I have to get two other people to cover for them because I know they are not going to do it. I just give up doing that. I will just do it myself. You are always going to find that. You are always going to find people who say, "I will be at the discipleship," and then when the discipleship comes, you are here, and they are not. "Oh, I just forgot." Well, let us use that word. Let us forget you. You come next time, we will not show up. Dependability. I am telling you something.

Look at the last part of that verse: "loving favor rather than silver and gold."

Proverbs 3:1-4

My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

You see, you have to find it in God first, and then you will find it in others. Too many of God's people just want to find it in others without ever getting it in God first.

Proverbs 12:2

A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

Proverbs 13:15

Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

The word "favor" that we use is akin to the word "favorite." This is real simple, and I know that this is not popular today, and probably a bunch of you are not going to agree with it. It does not matter. I cannot help it if you do not know your Bible. You know God has favorites? You say, "Oh, brother, the Bible says that God has no respect of persons." That is for salvation.

Look at the twelve apostles. You had twelve. Out of that, you had three that were special. Out of that three, you only had one. He is the only apostle that Jesus ever said He loved. I know He loved them all. You know that Jesus had a special love for John. John was His favorite. John is the only apostle who, when everybody was there at the Last Supper, laid his head across on the breast of Jesus and heard the heartbeat of God. He is the only man in the history of the world up to that time that was able to do that. You are able to do it today because you have the heartbeat of God inside you with the Word of God, and you can hear His heartbeat. That is why John is such a great type.

Somebody said once, "What do you mean that Jesus had a special love for John?" I mean this: John had a special love for Jesus. That is what I mean. I know God loves us all. He does. The old saying is, "God takes care of fools and drunkards," and I do not drink much. But it is simple: when you find favor with God because of your relationship with Him, because of how much you love that book, I am not saying you become a monk and live in a monastery someplace. I am saying that all things become new. All things pass away, and your preference or your passion and everything about you, you hold nothing back, like last week in Proverbs 21:26, "giveth and spareth not." You will recognize what God has given to you, and your problem will not be not giving enough; your problem will be giving too much. That is a good problem to have.

When you do the work of God and give people what they really need, the investment of your life, you will earn a good name. That good name will bring into your life favor with people because you will become their favorite. That is why they ask me for you. That is why they watch you right now. No man lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. There is always somebody watching our lives.

I love everybody unconditionally. Nothing that you would do would keep me from loving you. Nothing. There is no time, no matter what you did, that I would not be there to try to help you. I love you that much. There are a few exceptions to that, obviously; if you are a child molester, go someplace else. I am sure you will find some lady who will take you in, but I am not. There are a few exceptions. But my favorite people will be those who share the burden of my ministry along by my side. I love everybody, but I am telling you, I was reading, this is going to sound corny, I was reading Shakespeare the other night. I know you would not think that I am a Shakespearean type of guy. I am very cultured. Where most people would say, "Get off your rear end," I would say, "Get off your external posterior extremity." It is culture. Very cultured.

I had a night I was reading Shakespeare. I remember that Shakespeare, in this account, was re-accounting what Henry V did back in the 1400s when he was getting ready, King of England, was getting ready to go to war with France. He pulled all of his troops together, and he gave a great long speech, and he ended like this: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. For he who this day sheds his blood with me shall truly be my brother." You see, there is a bond. When we are in the middle of the ministry, slugging it out together, we are not in the rear with the gear. We are in the combat up front, where it is coming over the wall faster than we can deal with it. I will tell you what, I love everybody, but I will tell you something, and it is the dying truth: my favorite people will be those who share my burden with this ministry by my side.

I have two passions, only two. One of them is the Word of God, and the other one is people. I like to do a lot of other things. I do. I still imagine fun things that we have all done together. I do. I love things we do together. I love going to Worlds of Fun on Halloween. I love the hayride. I love the Iron Man competition. I love the fun things that we do that have nothing to do with church. Mike, I remember how many years ago we went to watch you race over there a long time ago. I still remember that. I remember you coming around that corner and sliding into those big old tires into the dirt. I remember that little fourteen-year-old kid, just a little guy, who won the championship race. He was driving a quarter midget, I do not know what they are called, race cars. He was taking that thing out. He was in the lead, and there was an old pro that was behind

him trying to do everything he could to get that kid to go wide so he could get up there. That kid just held the line and won the race. I have never forgotten that. But that is not my passion.

I love the coyotes. There is nothing greater in this world than how I will cam it up, get your air rifle ready, make like a wounded rabbit, and when a coyote comes in, shoot him. It is an adrenaline pump like nothing else. Sometimes they will come in behind you. I was there the other day, sitting there, and I turned, and I looked over, and there was a coyote right here looking at me. That is not my passion. I like to watch the Chiefs play. That is why I asked because I could not find them. But that is not my passion. I do not care about baseball. Baseball is the most boring game in the world. Golf? Are you kidding me? Tennis? Okay. None of that is my passion. I have two passions in life. One of them is the Word of God, and the other one is the souls of men. You know why? Because they are the only two things going to last for all of eternity.

I like life. I enjoy life. You would have to look a long time to find somebody who does not have more fun than I do. We have fun together. We laugh. We tell jokes. We crack on each other. William and I are always getting on each other. I still make fun of his orthopedic shoes he wears, and his never-warm shins. But we love each other. We have fun together. But none of that is my passion. My passion is when you crawl into that foxhole together. I see you out there on the OPs, and I see you out there on the line. You are out there in the cold, and you do not have enough food, and the wind is howling down your back. You want to get back where it is warm and comfortable in the rear with the gear. But you know what? You have a dedication, and you have a determination, and you have a self-discipline, and you are going to hold the line where you are at. That is what I am talking about.

I am under no illusion that the ministry will cost you something. The ministry will cost you something. Everybody is just not willing to pay that cost. You will pay the cost of a new house. You will not even think about it. You will pay the cost of a new boat or a new car or new dish. You will pay the cost of a golf course club membership. You will join a fitness center that is going to cost you a thousand dollars a year when you can just go out and quit eating. But the cost of serving the Lord Jesus Christ through ministry is just too high for us.

I am lovingly kidding you here. I tell people all the time, "You are my favorite." I say, "You are my favorite." And you always say to me, "I just say that to everybody," which is not true. But I want to tell you something, you need to get this: in the ministry, you can have more than one favorite. You just do not understand. Let me explain it. Each of you is different. Each of you has different abilities to do the work that I see. Each of you has a uniqueness in what you do, what God has given you that maybe the other person does not have. But I want you to use that. I want you to allow God to take that and develop that. So, in each scenario, in each person, in each category, each of you can be my favorite in a different way.

We have four dogs in our house. Downstairs, they have Buddy and Daisy, brother and sister, a female and male Lab. I have pictures of them here on my phone someplace, and they are the cutest dogs in the world. When I go upstairs and open the basement door and look down, there is a gate there, and I will call their name. Two big heads will come around looking for me. I will be over there on Sunday, Monday morning, throwing up my sermon. They are on the couch, and

both of them are just lying there, just looking at me. They will not take their eyes off of me. They might drift off to sleep. The moment I move the chair, they are up. They are the most beautiful Labs you ever saw in your life. Crazy, but they are really good dogs. They really are. Somebody asked me one time, "Which of those is your favorite?" You would think that that would be a hard choice, but it is not when you put it in my mindset or context. I always answer, "Oh, that is easy. Buddy is my favorite male Lab. Daisy is my favorite female Lab."

We have two more dogs upstairs. We have Izzy, who was an adopted Border Collie, and we have Otis. Otis is a rat with a genetic defect that turned him into a dog. Otis is the sweetest little guy you ever want in your life. He is a great little puppy. He is nine years old or something like that, maybe older than that, but he is a good guy. Somebody says, "Which one of those is your favorite?" "Izzy is my favorite Border Collie. Otis is my favorite little dog."

I have two daughters. I have Kelly here, and I have Jamie, who is home sick. I have great daughters. I love them very much. Somebody would say to me, kind of sheepishly, like they are apologizing, "Which one is your favorite?" And I said, "Oh, that is easy. Kelly is my favorite oldest daughter. Jamie is my favorite younger daughter." You see, they both bring different things to the party, just like you guys do. When you only have one or two, "you are my favorite," you are very limited in your understanding of what is going on. Everybody here brings something to this ministry that is invaluable, and you will bring something that the other person next to you does not bring. In that, you are invaluable. It is just that simple. I do not make my favorite by outward appearances. I look at what they have done with the Word of God in their life, and do they have a good name? Because I want to be associated with a good name.

Each of you here brought into this church what God has called you to do, and you brought into it. You have looked at my ministry, what I am trying to do, and you said, "You know what? I am with him. That is what I want to do." You brought into this mess. I say, let it be known, my passion is only two things: the Bible and the people. God has given me a host of men and women that are invaluable to me because of what they do and how well they do it. We are a band of brothers who this day will shed his blood with me for the ministry's sake.

It all comes down to, as I said, dependability. Most people, with my military background and all that stuff, I watched all the special ops groups over the years and knew many of them. The British have the SAS, which is the Special Air Service, probably some of the greatest commandos in the world today. Their success is built on what they call the "seven Ps." I cannot tell you what they are because we have kids here today, but those seven Ps are what I build my ministry on, and it works. You know why it works? Because they use that to get the job done because it builds them dependability. In that sense, you are my favorite. Many of you, because you love the book, you love the people, the ministry, you have developed favor with people that they see in you what they want in themselves. As I said, you get to choose how people view you.

Somebody sitting back there this morning, "Well, you know, he is talking about that, he is talking about this." Hey, you chose where you are at today. I did not bring the beer over. I did not give you the pot. I did not do all that stuff you chose to do. I did not do that. Do not get upset with me because there are people within any church that want to serve God because of what God has

done for them. That was your choice. I am okay with it. I love you. I will buy you a cheeseburger after church this morning if that is what you need. I will do it. But at the end of the day, we choose how people view us by our choices.

When you give yourself to Christ and the Word of God, and you build the character qualities of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life, recognizing that that is a good name, then every day you and I should be a little more like Him. Every day we should act, we should think, we should be more like Christ, just a little bit every day. This process is talked about in Ephesians 4:15, where it says that we should "grow up into him." Most Bibles, most people misquote it and say "grow up unto him." You are not to grow up unto Him; you are to grow up into Him because every day you get a little closer to the day you are going to be Him. If you are doing your part and I am doing my part, then every day we are going to be a little more like Him. You have His book. You have His image. You have His Spirit, and you have His mind, unless we have taken all that in vain. All these things will give you a good name and favor with God and man to do the work in the ministry. People will see in your life. They say, "Hey, I am struggling. I want so-and-so to help me." We did not all start that way, did we? No.

Psalms 40:1-3

I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

It did not start that way for all of us. People get upset when I preach something like this because they think I did not include them. I did not include or exclude anybody. You are going to include or exclude yourself. But I am telling you this: we all started the same way. There was not one person in this room who started out being where they are at with God right now. Not one. There was not one person in this room who started out knowing the Bible like many of them know it now. We all started the same place. We made choices in life. We decided to do this or not to do this. We decided to train our children the right way or not. We decided to get into the Bible or play video games. We decided to do this or do that. We chose where we are at right now. I am cool with it. I am. I am not worried about you. I am worried about me. All these things will give you a good name and favor with God, and people will see it. They want to be part of it.

VII. God's Transformative Power

This is in the Bible. It is called God transforming you. None of us started out this way. Everybody who is where you are at today, that you are in your own heart, in your own mind, doing and understanding what God wants you to be and do, you went through a transformation process. You started as a new Christian, and then you brought yourself through the Word of God, through the Holy Spirit of God, through the ministry, whatever you did, to where you are at right now, or where you are not at right now.

The world can do many things for you. In particular, it can do four things for you:

2. The world can inform you. You can get on the internet, and the world will inform you or misinform you.
3. You can do something wrong, go to jail, and the world will reform you.
4. You can get out with a crowd and hang out with a crowd at school or wherever you go at work, and they can conform you.
5. But only the Bible can transform you.

In the Bible, as I talked about earlier, there are seven places where God changes somebody's name. Five of them are good, two of them are bad.

In Genesis 17, you had Abram. Abram, at that point in his life, was not where he needed to be with God. God had just found him, and he goes through a process of transforming himself. At one point in Genesis 17, God changes his name to Abraham. Abram means "high father." Abraham means "the father of many nations." He had his wife, Sarai, who means "princess." She goes through her struggles and everything that she does. In Genesis 17:15, God changes her name to Sarah, which means that she is going to produce many sons, and she is going to bring about the nation of Israel.

We talked about Jacob in Genesis 32. His name was "Supplanter," and then God changed it to Israel. But you want to look at chapter 32, what he had to go through for that change in his name.

You had Simon Peter. In Matthew 16:18, his name was Simon Barjona. Peter had to learn some things, and then God changes his name to Peter.

You had Saul. In Acts 13:9, he had to go through some things, and God changed his name to Paul.

Then you had the two bad guys. You had Jeconiah, who was the wicked king of Israel, who God took away his name, took "Jeho" out of it, and just called him Coniah, meaning "despised, broken idol." Then you had Jehoash, which has "Jeho" in it. All those kings had "Jeho" in their names. He was such a lame guy that God took his name off and just called him Joash. His name, Jehoash, meant "fire for Jehovah." When He took "Jehovah" off and just called him Joash, it just meant "fire." There are many of God's people that start out on fire for God, and they get their name changed the wrong way.

God wants to change your name, and He wants to give you a good name. He wants to give you a name and a reputation that when people see it, they want what you have. They want to see you when you walk into work, that on the worst day of their life, they know that they can come to you. They do not want to look at you and think about the party you had last night, or this or that, or whatever fun times you had, or the beer drinking down at the lake. They are not interested in that. They are looking for answers, and you and I, by taking God's name, should have the answers.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." We took it the day we got saved. Do we take it in vain? The Bible says that a good name is better than riches. It is better than all the

things in the world because there are only two things worth investing your life in in this world, because they are the only two things that are going to last for all of eternity. One of them is the Word of God. Everything else is going to pass away.